

No Room in the Inn
and
Other Interpretations

C. I. Scofield.



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No Room in the Inn and Other Interpretations

Chosen from the writings of

Rev. C. I. Scofield, D.D.

Author of "Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth,"
"Plain Papers on the Holy Spirit," "Lectures
on Galatians," "Addresses on Prophecy";
editor Scofield Reference Bible, and
author of the Scofield Bible Cor-
respondence Course

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Mary Emily Reily

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Foreword

THIS book is made of carefully chosen selections from the writings and public addresses of Dr. C. I. Scofield.

The principle of selection has been to take from those writings only expositions and interpretations of Scripture upon subjects of vital import to Christian faith and life.

In an age so intense and exacting as ours, there is scant time for the reading which nurtures the spiritual life, and it is hoped that the brevity and clearness with which these great themes are treated may bring them home helpfully even to the life most filled and engrossed.

M. E. R.

HARRISBURG,
October the first,
1913.

Interpretations

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS NIGHT

"Thou shalt call his name Jesus."

MATT. i. 21.

THE unique significance of this nativity, the fact that distinguishes it from every other birth in all earth's history, is that the Babe, truly born of a human mother, was "The Word" who was "in the beginning with God, and was God"—Mary's Babe, but "Immanuel," begotten of the Holy Creator Spirit. In the providential ordering of human affairs, concerning whose ends the actors themselves frequently have no thought, all the world was taxed (or enrolled) that a Jewish maiden might be brought to Bethlehem in fulfilment of a prophecy uttered seven hundred years before.

The unique birth.

John i. 1.

Isa. vii. 14.

Luke i. 35.

Luke ii. 1.

Micah v. 2.

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Literal fulfilment.

Isa. vii. 14.

Micah v. 2.

Dan. ix. 25,
26.

Prophecy is always literally fulfilled. Isaiah had predicted that The Messiah should be born of a virgin, Micah that He should be born in a particular village, and Daniel that He should be born at a particular time. The slow centuries passed, but when the time came each prediction was fulfilled; not in some so-called "spiritual" sense, but with exact literalness.

The crowded inn.

Luke ii. 7.

The Lord of glory was cradled in a manger, the immediate reason being that the inn was overcrowded; the moral reason that the one universal Exemplar and Friend must begin His life under circumstances so lowly that no son of Adam could ever feel that Jesus was good because more fortunately circumstanced than he. He got underneath the most abject.

There was no room for Him in the inn. It was not hostility which excluded Him. The inn was pre-

occupied. It is so to-day with hearts, houses, time, business, pleasure—there is “no room;” every inch of space is filled. People do not hate Jesus—they have no room for Him.

The supremest emotion aroused by the birth of Jesus was joy. He was born to toil, to suffer, to die—but angels and men rejoiced.

The first to see and wonder were the shepherds, the simple ones; it required a star and a council of scribes to get three wise men to Jesus.

The wise men did very well so long as they followed the star, but when they came to great Jerusalem they forsook the star to ask counsel of Herod, and the Scribes. They found the King indeed, but at the cost of the slaughter of the innocents. And still many innocents are slaughtered by seeking the wis-

Joy bells.

Luke ii.
10-14.

Luke ii.
8-18.

Matt. xi.
25.

Matt. ii.
1-12.

*The foolish
wise men.*

Matt. ii. 2,
10.

1 Cor. ii.
5-9.

Matt. xi.
25.

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dom of God through mere knowledge.

*The
three-fold
Saviour.*
Luke ii. 11.

¹ Pet. ii.
24.

² Cor. v.
21.

Heb. x.
10-18.

John iii. 3;
14-16.

Gal. ii. 20.

Heb. vii.
24, 25.

Rom. viii.
2.

Gal. v. 16,
17.

Rom. viii.
2.

¹ Thess. iv.
14-16.

He was born a Saviour. The Epistles take up this saving work of Christ the Lord, and show that He is a Saviour in a three-fold sense —by His sacrificial death He saves His people from judgment because of the guilt of their sins. “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

By His resurrection-life, imparted to His people, through the new birth, by His intercession and shepherdly care and by the indwelling Spirit, He saves them from the power of sin, that is from the necessity of living in known sin. “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”

By His second coming, He will save His people from the presence

of, and conflict with sin. "For the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

1 Cor. xv.
51, 52.
Heb. ix. 28.

He took upon Himself the whole work of salvation, and therefore salvation, from beginning to end, belongs to Christ, and to Him alone. The sinner trusts, Christ saves; the saint yields, the Holy Spirit gives victory.

Heb. x. 12.
Heb. i. 3.

THE FIRST SIN

"As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." ROM. v. 12.

STRICTLY speaking, the fall of man was not the beginning of sin. Sin entered the world by one man, but sin had already entered the universe. Isaiah traces sin back to its true beginning, in the fall of Satan. "How art thou fallen from

*The fatal
"I will."*
Rom. v. 12.

Isa. xiv.
12-16.

heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning. . . . For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. . . . I will be like the most High." Sin entered the universe of God when a splendid angel said "I will." The essence of sin is self-will, or lawlessness; as the essence of holiness is loving subjection to the will of God.

The universal experience.
Gen. iii.
1-6.

Rom. iii.
23.

1 John iii.
4.

Luke x. 29.

Isa. lix. 2.

That the history of man's fall should be thought mere allegory by any descendant of Adam is strange indeed, for, in all essential particulars, it has been re-enacted in every human life. In every life there has been a first sin; in every life that sin consisted in violating some part of the known will of God; in every life that sin wrought to separate the sinner from God; in every life there was some poor effort at self-justification; and to every such life there

comes a seeking God offering salvation; and, in this endlessly repeated tragedy, the tempter has been Satan. Why, then, should it be thought incredible that what has been true in all subsequent human lives should have been true in the first human life?

John iii. 16.

² Tim. ii.
26.

Satan's method is to insinuate a doubt: "Yea, hath God said ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" So Satan begins by suggesting that the will of God for us is, at some point, hard and ungracious; that some forbidden thing might have been left within our liberty of choice. "I knew thee that thou art an hard man," is the unspoken complaint of our hearts when Satan tempts us to depart from the will of God. It is the sure danger sign. Let us learn to be affrighted whenever we detect the smallest murmuring against God.

Satan's method.
Gen. iii. 1.

Matt. xxv.
24.

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Gen. iii. 4.

Having instilled a doubt as to God's love, Satan goes on to question the truth of God's word. "Ye shall not surely die." Every denial of retribution for sin is instigated by Satan, and directly contradicts, not alone God's word, but the testimony of nature and reason.

Gen. iii. 5.

The adversary's third step is an appeal to pride, especially pride of intellect. "Ye shall be as gods knowing."

In the characteristic modern attitude toward revealed truth these temptations meet. For that attitude is one of denial of the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, and this denial is justified by appeal to proud human learning.

Gen. iii. 6.

"And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof,

and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." Here is a perfect illustration of worldliness—"The lust of the flesh; and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life."

¹ John ii.
16.

The immediate consequence was alienation from God. For the first time these high creatures of God felt instinctively their unfitness for His presence. The ultimate consequences of sin they could not then know, but soon learned—physical death, and also that alienation from the life of God which is spiritual death. "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God." "And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons." The futile effort of sinful man to clothe himself for God's presence!

The two deaths.
Gen. iv. 19.

Gen. iii. 7.

Isa. lxiv. 6.

Eph. iv. 18.

Rom. x. 3.

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Righteousness.

Luke xviii.
12.

Phil. iii. 6.

Rom. iii.
22.

Gen. iii. 9.

In Scripture the garment is the constant symbol of righteousness, and righteousness is that which fits for God's presence. Neither self-righteousness, "I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess," or legal righteousness, "Touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless," but only God's righteousness, "Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe," enables sinful man to stand in the presence of God.

"And the LORD called unto Adam and said unto him, Where art thou?" The effect of the first sin was to bring Jehovah down to seek, and to save that which was lost. Thus sin broke God's creation rest, and from the first sin of the first man until now, He has been unweariedly seeking the lost.

“But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.”

John v. 17.

“And the LORD God said unto the serpent . . . upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.” Before the curse, the serpent was not only the “most subtle,” but probably also the most beautiful of creatures below man. Even as cursed, a serpent cannot make an ungraceful movement. But, whatever form of beauty this creature may have borne, it lent itself to Satan’s uses, and now, cursed of God, every actual serpent is a hieroglyph of sin; an awful illustration of Satan’s power to degrade and curse. And Satan himself cannot escape the shame; “And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent called the devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world”—so true is it that all men must choose to be eter-

The serpent symbol.

Rev. xii. 9.

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nally identified with either Satan or with Christ.

Num. xxi.
9.

A sin of Israel was punished by a plague of serpents, a method of retribution, which was perhaps designed to remind them of all that, from Eden on, had been the terrible message of that symbol. But how mysterious must the remedy have seemed; a serpent of brass made the object of saving faith! Some suggestion of the shame and humiliation of the cross may be found in the fact that Christ appropriated the brazen serpent type to Himself. "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up."

John iii. 14.

But all this, though it prepares us to see that Christ "lifted up," after the analogy of the serpent of brass, is in some profound sense associated with sin and the holy wrath

of God against sin, does not explain that association. Not until the final, terrible word of the Spirit by Paul do we come to that mystery, beyond whose frontiers no finite mind may go. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." This is the midnight horror of the atoning work of Christ. That we might be made "the righteousness of God" (immeasurable height!) it was somehow necessary that He, the sinless and holy one, should be, in those awful hours, in some inscrutable sense "made sin"—associated with the whole serpent symbolism, with the curse, with Satan's foulness, with man's shame, defilement and ruin—immeasurable depth!

"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise

² Cor. v.
21.

Gal. iii. 13.

The undying enmity.
Gen. iii. 15.

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thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel"—the first promise of a Redeemer. This is the seed, out of which grew the tree of the cross. It implies the final humiliation and defeat of Satan by Christ, the "seed of the woman."

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

"No man is justified by the law in the sight of God." GAL. iii. 11.

A ministry of death.

Rom. iii. 20.

Gal. iii. 10.

THE Divine purpose in the giving of the law was not salvation, for "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight," but conviction and condemnation. "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse."

To see this is of the last importance, if we are really to honor the law. So long as we regard the law as fatherly advice, or as a mere

ideal to be striven toward, trusting meanwhile the vague mercy of God to overlook our short-comings, and to accept our good intentions in the place of perfect obedience, we are steeling our consciences against the very work the law was set to do.

But that is exactly what the Galatianism current in Christendom to-day is doing. The edge is gone from the law. No man feels condemned, undone, and under the curse and wrath of the law, and of God, on account of his sins, for the reason that he keeps on honestly praying, when the commandments are read, "Have mercy on me, O God, and incline my heart to keep thy law." The law is never honored by the sinner until he accepts its deathful sentence, and turns in faith to the One who has, in his stead, suffered death.

Gal. i. 6; ii.
19-21; iii.
1, 2, 24, 25.

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Ex. xx.
3-11.

Luke x. 28.

Ezk. xviii.
4, 20.

Rom. iii.
19, 23.

The first table requires that God shall reign alone over our lives, the alone object of supreme love, worship and reverence—indeed, the perfect summary of the first table, approved as such by Christ, is in the great formula, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength and with all thy mind.” In approving the summary, the Lord added, “this do, and thou shalt live.”

The law is not a creed to be confessed, nor an ideal of human conduct; it is a fiat of God, to which is attached the awful sanction, “the soul that sinneth it shall die,” and there is but one plea possible to the sinner, “guilty.” For the moment any mortal faces honestly that imperative demand that he must love God with *all* his heart, soul, strength and mind, he sees that never for a fraction of a second,

in all his life, has he kept the law.

The lawyer, in the passage quoted from Luke, under the impact of Christ's tremendous demand for performance, and not mere effort or desire, should have fallen at His feet with a cry for mercy. He chose rather to "justify himself." Alas! millions are going the same miserable way, holding the law for a counsel of God instead of a death-sentence. A criminal "establishes" the law, when he comes before the Court and pleads guilty, not when he idly talks about reforming and turning over a new leaf. With all his reformation, he is just a law-breaker seeking to evade the just sentence of the law.

Just as the first table of the law is summarized in the demand that God shall be loved with the whole of every part of man's complex

Luke x. 28.

Rom. x. 5.

Luke x. 29.

Rom. iii.
31.

Twice
guilty.

being, so the second table is summarized in the demand that our fellowman shall be loved up to the measure of love for self.

The neighbor is any human being to whom we can do good. It is not a sentimental good feeling and benevolent desire toward all men, but an active service toward all, for love's sake; a service, the only limitation of which is opportunity. When this is seen, the second table becomes as crushingly convictive as the first.

Have we sought as earnestly, toiled as hard, sacrificed as much to do, as we have to get? Have we bestowed as much thought, solicitude and active effort upon others as upon ourselves? Such questions answer themselves to any sincere and honest soul. Here again our only possible plea is "guilty."

*Christ
saves.*

Gal. iii. 23.

And then the law has done its work, and we are "shut up" to

the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. We have no hope of life eternal through a law which only shows us our guilt, and pronounces upon us a righteous sentence of death. But Jesus redeems us, not alone from the curse of the law, but from the law itself, that the blessing of Abraham may come to us through Christ and that we may receive the adoption of sons. "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ that we might be justified by faith, but after that faith is come we are no longer under the schoolmaster."

Gal. iv. 5.

Gal. iii.
24-25.

Does God then, when acting in grace, abandon the righteousness of the law, and leave the believer to "sin, that grace may abound"? God forbid! The believer is not under the law, but that is a half-truth which may be wrested to the doing of great mischief. The other, and inseparable half, is that

Grace gives victory.

Rom. vi.
1, 2.

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Rom. vi.
14.

2 Pet. i. 4.

1 John v.
11, 12.

1 Cor. vi.
19.

Rom. viii.
2-4.

*Law does
not sanctify.*

the believer is under grace. "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace," and grace, through the impartation of the Divine nature, of the resurrection life of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, fulfils, *in* the believer, that righteousness of the law, which was never for one fleeting moment fulfilled *by* him.

There are two ways, then, of thwarting God's intent in the giving of the law: the sinner thwarts that intent by holding it for an ideal to be approximated, the Christian thwarts it by seeking to use it as a means of sanctification. The analogue of all this is found, for the Christian of to-day, in the contrast between the experiences of the seventh and eighth chapters of Romans. The former is the experience of a Christian in whom rages the conflict between his new and

spiritual nature received in regeneration, and his old "flesh," the natural man. "To will is present with him," because the new man yearns to do the will of God, but how to "perform that which is good he finds not," for the old man is strong.

Moreover the law is a continual torment to him, for, being born again, he is able to "delight in the law of God after the inward man." Striving to form a character under law, he but finds "another law" in his members, warring against the law of his mind and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin, which is in his members. It is, alas! the average Christian experience.

But the eighth of Romans is an experience pitched in another key. Where all was wretchedness and defeat in the seventh chapter, now all is triumph and exultation. What

Conscience tormented.

Rom. vii.
22.

Rom. vii.
23.

Victory through the Spirit.

Rom. viii.
2, 31-39.
—

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1 Cor. vi.
19.

Eph. v. 18.

Eph. i. 3.

Rom. viii.
16, 17.

John xvii.
18.

Phil. i. 29;
iii. 10; I
Pet. ii. 11.

Eph. v.
18-20.

*The law
fulfilled.*

makes the difference? One fact, and but one. The man of the seventh of Romans is a Christian, regenerated, justified, saved, and possessing, also, the Holy Spirit. The man of the eighth of Romans is the same man, but now filled with the Spirit. The believer is "blessed with all spiritual blessings," but observe where, "in the heavenly," in Christ Jesus. "The heavenly" is the sphere of the believer's present association with Christ in position, service, suffering and world rejection. When he is maintaining in experience his association with Christ, in these four particulars he is "in the heavenly in Christ Jesus," where all his blessings are. But this can be maintained only through the Holy Spirit in His fullness.

The eighth of Romans, like the fourth and fifth of Galatians, opens the secret of victory through the

law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor." If I love my neighbor, then the law of love, "written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart," will govern my conduct as the external law never did, and never could. I will not even desire to wrong my neighbor whom I love, for adultery, murder, theft, and false witness will be abhorrent; nor will it be possible for me to covet anything which, if granted to me, would deprive my neighbor. And my love for my neighbor will regulate my habits as well, for the constraint of love will make me question these by the supreme test —will this harm or will it help my neighbor? The love of God Himself is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, and "love is the fulfilling of the law."

Rom. viii.
3.Gal. v.
16-18.2 Cor. iii.
2.1 Cor. viii.
10-13.

Rom. v. 5.

Rom. xiii.
10.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord."

LUKE iii. 4.

*John the
Baptist.*

Mal. iii. 1.

Luke vii.
26, 27.

John i. 29,
30; iii. 29.

Matt. iii.
7-10.

*His testi-
mony.*

Matt. iii.
10.

JOHN the Baptist is the last of the distinctively Jewish line of prophets; the last and greatest of these. Indeed, he was more than a prophet, for he was himself the subject of prophecy—"This is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger." Unlike the prophets who saw the promise of the Messiah afar off, it was the privilege of John to point Him out, and it was his peculiar joy that he heard the Bridegroom's voice. He showed successive generations how to "prepare the way of the Lord" by testifying against sin; and that not abstractly, but personally and concretely, sternly insisting on repentance.

He testified to Jesus as the Ax Wielder. It was no longer a ques-

tion of pruning the tree of fallen human nature. That was law-work. The whole history of Israel under the old covenant was a demonstration of the futility of that method; now the "ax is laid unto the root of the tree." Jesus is the Baptiser with the Holy Ghost and with fire. He cuts down the old tree, but plants a new one. "But one mightier than I cometh. . . . He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." Jesus wields the separating fan. "He will thoroughly purge his floor." Just as surely as there is a heavenly garner for the wheat of God, just so surely there is "fire unquenchable" for the tares.

Jesus is the Eternal One. "He was before me." This, if Jesus was not pre-existent, was not true, for John the Baptist was, humanly, the elder of the two.

Isa. v. 1-7.

Matt. iii.
11; Acts i.
5-8; ii. 33.Luke iii.
16.Luke iii.
17.Matt. xiii.
30, 41, 42.

John i. 15.

Luke i. 25,
26.

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John i. 29.

Jesus is the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Every lamb sacrificed by the ancient people of God, prefigured this final Lamb, and had efficacy because of Him. And just here is the heart of John's great ministry. It was convictive because the "way of the Lord" was a way of holiness, and in that way none could walk who made light of sin, or sought refuges of lies in Abrahamic ancestry, or like peculiar privileges. Men must be convicted of sin, because the mission of Christ is to save from sin, and only those who feel their need will seek a Saviour. Conviction prepares the way for Christ.

Repentance.

Matt. iii. 2.

John's ministry demanded repentance, and defined it, because while repentance saves no one, no one is saved without it. It is not feeling badly about sin; it is, in consent and will, forsaking sin. Only Jesus can save His people from their sins, but

repentance brings every sin to Jesus to be put away. But all this is only preliminary to the presentation of Christ as God's own Lamb, whose sacrifice puts away sin. This, and this only, is "the Gospel." All other of John's words and acts were preparatory, not for the church, and salvation by grace, but for the earth-kingdom of Christ.

Conviction, repentance, restitution, baptism, confession of sins—these were kingdom teachings, and therefore legal, not gracious.

And John could thus minister because he sought nothing for himself. Save Jesus, no other man has been so truly humble. To those who would know concerning him he said, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness." Of Christ he said, "I am not worthy to stoop down," even to do a servant's work. It was his joy, not envy, that men

Luke i. 17.

Humility.

John i. 23.

Mark i. 7.

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John iii.
26-30.

forsook him to follow Jesus: "He must increase, but I must decrease."

The mystery of permitted evil.

Matt. xiv.
1-12.

Matt. v. 11;
xxiv. 8-13;
Rev. vi. 9-
11; xiii. 15;
xx. 4.

Luke vii.
24-29.

And in the death of this humblest of God's servants the mystery of permitted evil reaches its deepest depth. A lewd woman hated him, a dancing girl asked for his head, a filthy despot commanded it to be brought! For John, truly, a swift and welcome release. This is the age of martyrdom, and ere long martyr blood will again become a very flood.

But when John was dead the Son of God preached his funeral sermon!

A BLIND MAN HEALED

"I am the Light of the world."

JOHN ix. 5.

"He saw a man."

John ix. 1.

"**A**ND as Jesus passed by, he saw a man who was blind from his birth."

Now what will happen? For,

remember this blind man is a test, a touchstone, to bring out what is in Jesus—and to bring out what is in the disciples, too. For every misfortune, every calamity, every sorrow, every deprivation and tragedy of life, is a touchstone for the passerby. The beggar on Dives' steps was God's testing of Dives.

Matt. xxv.
31-46.

Luke xvi.
19-31.

John ix. 2.

"Scientif-
ic" cruelty.

John ix.
3, 4.

"Man" or
"prob-
lem?"

For the disciples the blind man was an occasion for rabbinic hair-splitting. "Who did the sin, this man or his parents?" To Jesus the blind man was an occasion for "working the works of God" for his healing and saving. Perhaps no passage brings into sharper contrast the mind of Christ, and the average minds of the average disciples. We do not care greatly about the individual, the man. Everything is a "problem." Poverty, crime, weakness, old age, sickness, all suffering—these are "problems." In their presence we

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ask our hard little questions about distribution of wealth, heredity, environment, sanitation.

The East Side festers and brawls and "sells a girl for wine." We plant a "settlement," and study the question scientifically. In other days, when men still believed in Divine power, the Five Points became intolerable, and Faith said, "Let us plant the Gospel there," and lo! the old miracles: the captives are unbound, the filthy become clean, and the children's faces are happy.

There is a scientific and police way of looking at crime and wretchedness, and there is a Christ Jesus way. One sees "crime"—an abstract thing, or problem; the other sees a criminal, a soul lost to God, a life lost to humanity.

*Christ's
way.*

I am saying nothing against the detective point of view, the reform-

er's point of view, except that Christ was neither detective nor reformer. He was humanity's Priest, Sacrifice and Friend. Our "problems" but touched Him with compassion, and set Him to working the works of God. They set us to breeding bacilli from the agony of dumb animals.

John viii.
3-11.

When Jesus announces Himself in some new character it is never an abstract thing, as a mere declaration of fact concerning Himself, but a revelation of something in Himself, which answers to human needs. And in John's account of Him, there is commonly an illustrative miracle. The Light of the world will give sight to the blind eyes of this man's body, but He will also give eyes to his soul.

*Revelation
through
deeds.*

"Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He an-

John ix.
5-7.

John ix.
34-38.

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swered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him."

Faith is a living thing.

John ix.
11.

John ix.
17.

John ix.
38.

How the faith of that man grew! Mark the stages—first he speaks of Him as "A man that is called Jesus," then as "a prophet" and then as "the Son of God," and note the steadfastness with which, against all opposition and persuasion, this young man stood manfully by his convictions. He could not answer the sophistries and dogmatisms with which his simple testimony was met, but he could stand by that testimony at all hazards. That was the simple manliness of him, and his reward was increase of knowledge and faith.

The first need.
Luke iv.
18.

Light is man's first need. He does not know himself, he does not

know his state, he does not know God. Man is bond-servant to much beside sin. Darkness, ignorance, blind traditionalism, dead apathy, race and personal prejudice, these are all fetters.

These Jews illustrate that. They were Abraham's seed; that, they thought, answered everything. Conceit is a fetter. What a lying boast, "we have never yet been in bondage to any man," when politically, they were in bondage to an assortment of despots, working down from Cæsar, through Herod and Pilate, to the meanest tax-gatherer. Religiously they were in bondage to a system of traditionalism and of wearisome outward observances—"the yoke that neither we nor our fathers were able to bear."

John viii.
33.

Acts xv.
10.

*A world of
slaves.*

Luke iv.
18.

To Jesus, the world seemed peopled by slaves. No man was free. Cæsar was only the empurpled slave of his ambitions, his fears and

his vices. Herod and Pilate were slaves, first to Cæsar, and then, each, to a host of personal ambitions, fears and sins. And the pathetic and tragic fact to Him was, that so far from knowing their state they fancied themselves free. It is the pathos and tragedy of the race! All men fancy themselves free and think only Christians are in bondage.

Christ is "the Light of the world." Perhaps as He uttered those sublime words, all about Him the eight great lamps of the women's court were paling in the rosy coming of dawn. The worshippers were turning toward the East. But the true Light had risen already. The light of the knowledge of the true character of God was spreading more and more over the face of Jesus Christ.

John i. 9.

2 Cor. iv.
6.

John xviii.
38.

And it was just when every other light had failed. The primitive

civilization, in the Euphrates and the Nile valleys, had gone, leaving masses of monstrous and grotesque masonry covered with childishly bombastic inscriptions, which have not enriched the world by one noble thought, or clear idea. Greek civilization had perished in unfathomable moral degradation. Roman civilization had but borrowed from Greece. Jewish civilization had become a mere bigotry. It was time for the Light to shine, time for the Breaker of fetters to come. He came to preach deliverance to the captive, and recovery of sight to the blind.

Luke iv.
18.

“I am the Light of the world”—Jesus took the lowest place, but He set His claim above all other claims. Not a light, but *the* Light. What does He mean by light? He tells us: He means truth. All sin, all prejudice, all narrowness, all blindness, all bigotry, hatred and

*The real
freedom.*

John viii.
12.

Matt. x. 37.

John viii.
40.

self-will, all these, in the last analysis, are phases of a monstrous lie.

Truth puts things into right relations. God seems very great, inconceivably good, inconceivably near, perfectly free, when Christ reveals Him to the sons of men. God is perfectly free because He is only minded to do right—His will is Himself. Affectionate harmony with that will is, therefore, perfect freedom.

Now a test. An unknown man, apparently a Galilean carpenter, said in the temple one day "I am the light of the world." Presently He was put to death. Nineteen hundred years, and more have passed. What account have they to give of the truth or falsity of that word?

Just this; in the world to-day the light of liberty for the spirit, soul and body of man is brightest where Christ is most known, best obeyed. And the darkest places in the world,

and the heaviest shackles upon the mind, soul and body of man, are found where Christ is least known, least obeyed.

And this is absolutely true of individuals, as of nations.

THE NEW BIRTH

"Ye must be born again." JOHN iii. 7.

DOES the value of a lost soul depend, in the estimate of Jesus, upon its antecedents or surroundings, its past and present, what it has been or is? Is it, for example, better worth Christ's trouble to win good Nicodemus, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a sincere and candid man of great openness of mind, an earnest seeker after truth, than the bad Samaritan woman who came out to Jacob's well?

The answer is that to Him both are equally lost, and both worth equal suffering to save. Both are

*The value
of a soul.*
Matt. xvi.
25.

John iii.
1, 2.

John iv.
17, 18.

Rom. iii.
23.

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alike and equally capable of becoming children of God, by the new birth; both are equally good raw material out of which the Divine Potter can make saints, but as far as the record goes Jesus gets more profit of the bad Samaritan woman than of good Nicodemus. This puts no premium on antecedent badness, for He has still greater profit of conscientious, religious Saul, whose training in the Scriptures, and in the law, made a magnificent foundation for grace. Only he must first become the new Paul.

The new birth.

Gal. v. 21-23.

John iii.
3-7.

Here then the imperative falls, "Ye must be born again," and the *must*, though imperative, is not arbitrary. It is inevitable in view of what human nature has become. The natural man cannot produce the spiritual character: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, so "Ye must be born again."

To the inevitable question "How?" Our Lord returns a two-fold reply. The new birth is the work of the Spirit, fertilizing the seed of the word. Like the wind, the Spirit is invisible, mysterious, in the new creation; and this new birth becomes the instant possession of "whosoever" believes on Christ, "lifted up," that is crucified.

Not faith in Christ's character, or divinity, humanity, words or miracles—though these are elements of true faith—but faith in Christ crucified; the personal trust in Him as having put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself—this brings the new birth.

There is a sense in which, by creation, all men are the offspring of God. This was Paul's doctrine from Mars Hill and it is a truth, which distinguishes man from the animal creation, but upon it has been built a doctrine of the divine

The Fatherhood of God.

Acts xvii.
28.

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Fatherhood which it is sought to make identical with Christ's new doctrine of the Fatherhood through the new birth.

Gen. i. 27,
28.

This hopelessly confuses two things radically distinct, namely, the supreme position of men in the material universe as the "offspring" of God by creation; and the new relationship of birth into the family of God through the Holy Spirit. Christ came that the "offspring" of God might become, by a spiritual re-birth, children of God. The "offspring" are mere lost souls, "dead in trespasses and sins," "alienated from the life of God by wicked works." The children of God are saved, recreated in Christ Jesus, made partakers of the divine nature, baptised into Christ.

Eph. ii. 1.

Eph. iv. 18.

Eph. ii. 8.

Titus iii.
3-6.

2 Pet. i. 4.

1 Cor. xii.
12, 13.

JACOB'S WELL

“The water which I shall give.” JOHN iv. 14.

HERE is a contrast between the water at the bottom of Jacob's well, and the living water which Jesus gives, and these waters are, of course, symbols of spiritual verities. As for the “living water,” we may with the help of John viii. 38, 39, surely interpret that it stands for the indwelling Holy Spirit, “But the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well (literally, fountain) of water springing up into eternal life.”

Living water.

John iv.
14, R.V.

Jacob's well out of which the water must be drawn laboriously, and a little at a time, stands over against this upspringing fulness and vigor of life. What does it mean? It means the law; it means legal

Grace, not works.

righteousness. But that, you say, is a theological answer; what in the terms of modern religious life does Jacob's well mean? It means "building" character, painfully adding a brick of uprightness to a brick of prayerfulness, and so on. That so the heavenly character comes, is the root error of modern ethics. It is going back to Jacob's well. Real Christian character is the overflow of the upspringing fountain. When we keep the inlet clear, ("Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption, let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice") and the outlet open, ("Quench not the Spirit,") then "character" will result. For Christian character is the possession of nine graces, love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. And

Eph. iv. 30.
31.

1 Thess. v.
19.

Gal. v. 22,
23.

these cannot be "built," they are a nine-fold "fruit."

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

"Lazarus, come forth." JOHN xi. 43.

IF in His whole ministry Our Lord wrought a great miracle with a definitely doctrinal purpose, it is safe to say that the raising of Lazarus was that miracle. Nothing less than this can be meant by, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby."

The evidence of miracle.

John xi. 4.

A hundred questions, mostly foolish, curious, impertinent, clamor to be asked, if we assume this meaning of that otherwise enigmatic verse. Does our Lord mean that the sickness and death of His friend was ordained to the end that the resurrection of the body, a vital truth of the new teaching, might be

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established by an instance conspicuous and open to investigation? Did He tarry two days still after hearing of Lazarus' sickness to test the faith of the sisters?

These, and questions like these, sorely trouble minds of a certain order. Better not to ask them. But if you must ask them, here is your answer: We do not know.

What we know is that Jesus loved Martha and Mary and Lazarus better than you and I have ever loved anyone, and we know that, much as He talked about resurrection—His own resurrection, and the resurrection of the just and of the unjust—it was the one truth in all His teaching which made least headway in the apprehension of His hearers. And we know that Christ's doctrine of the resurrections to this very day has of all His doctrines fallen most upon the way-side and thorn-ground of the human heart.

Mark ix.
31, 32.

Acts xvii.
32.

The orthodox confession to-day goes no whit beyond Martha's "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day," the truth, of course, being that this doctrine of the resurrection lay in Martha's mind as probably it lies in your mind, a perfectly dead and sapless article of belief.

John xi.
24.

Now, Jesus Christ has no abstract doctrines, no affirmations concerning which men may hold wrong notions, with no harm to themselves. Every one of His teachings glows and throbs with life. Not a syllable of that body of teaching, concerning which He said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life;" and "the word that I have spoken the same shall judge him in the last day," not a syllable of all those words but is meant for saints to live upon, and to be transformed by.

Truth and life.

John vi.
63.

John xii.
48.

The resurrections.

See, then, as to this matter of resurrections, how the case of Lazarus interprets and illustrates the teaching:

1. Who had told Martha anything about "the resurrection at the last day"? Not Christ. There is no such doctrine as the doctrine of "the resurrection," meaning one resurrection only, at one time. It is of a piece with that other unwarrantable generalization, "the general judgment." There are resurrections, many; judgments, many. Christ taught of "an hour" when dead souls should hear the word of God and live. That "hour" is already more than nineteen hundred years long. And Christ taught of another "hour" during which "all that are in the graves shall come forth." But not all simultaneously, for immediately He taught of two resurrections, one "unto life"—one "of damnation." Years afterward, by the pen of the apostle

John v. 25.

John v. 28.

John v. 29.

John, the Church was taught that one thousand years of time will divide these two resurrections; and by the pen of Paul that the first of these, the "resurrection unto life," is ever impending.

Rev. xx.
1-16.

1 Thess. iv.
15-18.

2. And Martha, truly a believer in "the resurrection," but having no comfort of her belief because she thinks of it as an event of the distant future, "at the last day," when, in very fact, the sun had not westered another hour before her brother came forth from the tomb in resurrection life. And this may be true of *our* dead, "for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. . . . For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout,

1 Cor. xv.
22, 23.

1 Thess. iv.
14-16.

. . . and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

3. And resurrection is verily a resurrection, the bringing to life again of a dead body, not a thing to be "spiritualized" into some "mode of immortality." And the resurrection, not of all the dead, but of all who sleep in Christ Jesus, the "resurrection unto life" may be as near to our beloved dead as it was to Lazarus.

THE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS

"The damsel is not dead but sleepeth."

MARK v. 39.

THIS miracle is one of the twelve mighty works following immediately after the Sermon on the Mount by which the King

Kingdom power.

Matt. viii.
Matt. ix.

Mark ii-vi.

demonstrated His power to deal with every consequence of sin, and to produce on the earth every aspect of kingdom blessing foretold by the prophets.

How many facets every gem of truth has! We see here the compassion of Jesus, His tirelessness in service, His gentleness, His divine power, His recognition of human need, even in the case of one upon whom a miracle has been wrought, the contrast of fear and faith, and the first great interpretation of the mystery of death. "The child is not dead [in your sense of that word, seeing only the grave,] but sleepeth." Put this scene and these words over against the Old Testament reticence, and if there were nothing more to the same purpose in the New Testament, these alone interpret death and give the believer a sure hope. For sleep implies an awaking.

Isa. xi.
1-16.

Jer. xxiii.
5-8.

Ezk. xxxvii.
11-28.

Zech. xiv.
1-21.

The loveliness of Christ.

Mark v.
30-34.

Matt. xxvii.
52.

John xi. 11.

Acts xiii.
36.

1 Cor. xv.
20, 51.

1 Thess. iv.
14.

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The uses of miracle.

John iii. 2.

Rom. vi.
14.

Phil. iv.
13.

Rom. viii.
14-18.

Matt. v-vii.

Acts ii.
14-40.

Matt. v.
3-12.

It is strange how completely the greater evidential purpose of the miracles of Christ has been overlooked. Nicodemus argued rightly, when he said "We know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him." But the deeper spiritual purpose of His miracles was the demonstration of His power to reproduce His lofty ethic in the terms of human character and conduct. A high ethic without impartation of enabling power, would be a gospel of despair, mocking the weakness of man.

The two great sermons of Scripture, Christ's Sermon on the Mount and Peter's Pentecost sermon, are the two parts of a perfect whole. The precept, so high that no man may attain unto it, is in the former; the power which lifts man into it, is in the latter.

In the case of the centurion's servant and the nobleman's son the will of Christ heals without His personal presence. The daughter of the Syrophenician woman is another like instance. It is noteworthy that both the Syrophenician and the centurion were Gentiles, and that in both instances our Lord commended their faith.

Matt. viii.
5.

John iv.
46.

Mark vii.
24-30.

The two contrasting principles of law and grace are finely illustrated in the two phrases "He was worthy for whom he should do this" and "Neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee."

*Law and
grace.*

Luke vii. 4.

Luke vii. 7.

It is inveterately characteristic of the legal, self-righteous way of looking at religion that it cannot imagine God doing kindnesses except to those who have, by goodness, established a kind of claim upon Him. The inner unspoken thought is, God ought to be good to the good. And it is just as char-

acteristic of the faith-way of looking at religion to find in God Himself a reason for expecting gracious kindnesses from Him. Legality looks at self and says, "I am good"; faith looks at God, and says, "He is good."

The elders of the Jews stood upon the worthiness of the centurion. The centurion stood upon the power of Christ, and set himself utterly aside.

The barrier between Christ and a human heart is never human sinfulness, but human self-sufficiency. It was this which made the Jewish heart harder than the nether mill-stone, as it was the consciousness of sinfulness and need which, at the first, made the Gentile heart accessible to Christ.

The one barrier.

John ix.
39-41.

PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS

"And five of them were wise and five foolish." MATT. xxv. 2.

WHAT now are the truths in relation to the ever-possible return of Christ, which He meant to teach through the parable of the ten virgins? This, most evidently, that the second coming of Christ will be a testing of the profession of discipleship.

Here are ten who certainly are alike in three respects—all make profession of spiritual chastity, all profess to be light-bearers, all fall asleep while the bridegroom tarries.

So far as men can see the ten are all alike. But there is a secret difference. "Five have oil in their vessels with their lamps;" five "took no oil." Oil is everywhere a symbol of the Holy Spirit, and the

The final test.

Matt. xxv.
1, 5.

Matt. xxv.
3, 4.

Rom. viii.
9.

possession or non-possession of the Spirit is the essential distinction between a moral professor and a true Christian. "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his." But outwardly a sleeping professor and a sleeping possessor are much alike.

Then comes the awakening cry, and the essential difference between the outwardly religious and the renewed is manifested. The whole scene is a testing of religious profession.

Matt. xxv.
12.

It will not do, in view of "But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not," to say that the foolish virgins are really Christians but unwatchful, unready. Jesus could never say to any weakest, most fallible believer, "I know you not."

These foolish virgins illustrate Hebrews vi. 4-8. There is a tentative and illuminating work of the

Spirit which does not go the length of regeneration, and the indwelling. The man in Hebrews "tastes" but does not whole-heartedly accept Christ. It is a solemn warning of the danger of mere profession, of the danger of being self-deceived through morality and church membership, with no real trust in Jesus Christ crucified, and so with no new birth, no indwelling Spirit.

Matt. vii.
22.

Ten had on the virgin's robe, ten had the lamp of the light-bearer, ten fell asleep, ten were awakened, but only five had the "oil of gladness." And, "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his." "I know you not."

Rom. viii.
9.

Matt. xxv.
12.

As the parable of the virgins will be a testing of the profession of discipleship, so the parable of the talents is a testing of servanthip.

*The true
servant.*
Matt. xxv.
14-30.

"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour where-

Matt. xxv.
13.

Matt. xxv.
14.

in the Son of man cometh." "Watch" because the Bridegroom may come at any moment, and then believers go into the feast—professors are excluded, the door is shut against them, and a voice from within says "I know you not." And "watch," because when Christ took His journey unto a far country He gave precious goods to His servants, and He will require an accounting at His return.

John xvi.
15.

What is meant by these "goods"? Observe they are "His goods." The Epistles, always the necessary complement of the Gospels, explain this.

1 Thess. ii.
4.

The goods are first the Gospel. "But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the Gospel, even so we speak."

Rom. i. 14,
15.

Paul, in receiving the glad tidings, had been made a trustee of the Gospel in behalf of the whole world. He was "debtor" and his

whole ministry was a joyous but unceasing effort to pay his debt, for, "it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful."

¹ Cor. iv.
^{1, 2.}

Secondly, the "goods" are the whole deposit of revealed truth, "once for all committed unto the saints." It was Paul's glory in his dying hour not only that he had fought a good fight, but that he had fought a victorious fight; he had by his courage in standing against legalism, agnosticism, and all heresy, "kept the faith."

² Jude 3,
R.V.

² Tim. iv.
7.

Thirdly, the "goods" are gifts of the Spirit. These are various. "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit;" given to all: "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal," and sovereignly bestowed: the selfsame Spirit, "dividing to every man severally as he will."

¹ Cor. xii.
4.

¹ Cor. xii.
7.

¹ Cor. xii.
11.

And so, just as there were two kinds of virgins, real and sham, so there are two kinds of servants. The five talent man and the two talent man differ in the amount of the trust estate committed to them, but they are the same kind of men. "And likewise he that had received two." Both were faithful, and both got precisely the same reward. But in the one talent man we have a sham servant, not a real one.

Matt. xxv.
17.

And at this point it is necessary to note that wherever the Gospel is preached it divides men into three classes—Christians, professors, rejecters. The professor is, of course, a rejecter at heart, but he is like the son in the parable, who said "I go, sir; and went not." This unsaved servant had no gifts of the Spirit. His one talent was that he knew the Gospel, and professed to be a herald of it. He may have preached eloquent ser-

Gal. i. 6-9.

mons, but he "hid" the old gospel of atoning blood.

THE ANOINTING AT BETHANY

"Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus." JOHN xii. 3.

WE shall never really grasp the significance of Mary's act unless we go back to the beginning of Mary's discipleship, and then come down with the story to this, its end. Have you ever noticed that you never see Mary apart from her sister Martha? Three times these sisters come before us in the Gospel story. This means that something is to be taught by contrast.

It is the vivid Bible way. "Two men went up to the temple to pray." Not two theories, nor two diverse principles, nor two types of doctrine, but two men. And how, by contrast, they bring each other into

Luke x.
38-42.

*Teaching
by contrast.*

Luke xviii.
10.

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relief! Jesus might have lectured that day on "the two basal theories of religion," and we should have forgotten or misunderstood Him. But we shall not misunderstand Him now. Forever for us those two men stand in the temple; the one unctuously thanking God that he is not as other men are; the other smiting upon his guilty heart, and crying for mercy—and we do not forget.

Luke xvi.
19.

And again, "There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus." Yes; and by means of Lazarus I shall find out the truth about Dives.

*Mary com-
mended.*

Luke x. 38,
39.

Luke x. 40,
41.

Luke x. 39.

Now here are two sisters. Begin with the first mention of them; Martha was "cumbered," "careful" and "troubled"; "Mary sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word." And some preacher will tell you

that we have here two desirable types of Christian character, practical Martha and meditative Mary, and that the church needs both types. But Jesus, when He was presently appealed to, did not say that.

And another preacher will tell you that here are two different temperaments, that Martha and Mary were "made that way," and could be, and do, no otherwise. But Jesus did not say that, either; Jesus did say that "But one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her." Mary chose to put acquaintanceship with Jesus and His word first in her Christian life; Martha chose to fussily serve Him first. Service has the third, not the first, place in the divine order: To know, in order to be, in order to do.

Luke x. 42.

Col. i. 9.

The next time these sisters come

*Mary the
soul-win-
ner.*

John xi.
45.

before us, we discover that Mary, because she began right, did more for Jesus than Martha, for "Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him."

Each of these sisters had, naturally, her own circle of friends, who, when the news of Lazarus' death went abroad, gathered to comfort them. Then came Jesus, and the resurrection of Lazarus, and then it became manifest that something in the bearing and testimony of Mary under her affliction, had impressed her circle of sympathizers, and when the mighty work was wrought, "many . . . which came to Mary . . . believed on him." And so it was "dreamy, unpractical Mary," as many people call her, who was the real servant, the soul-winner.

And now we can enter into the

beautiful and touching scene of the anointing at Bethany.

What was the heart of Mary's thought? To show that she loved Jesus, that nothing short of the offering of her costliest, most cherished possession could satisfy her heart? Yes, doubtless that too was in her lovely act, and may suffice to rebuke us, who give our least valued things to Him; but not this fathoms the depth of Mary's thought.

Was it her silent way of saying that, since Israel had not anointed Him King, one Jewish maiden would do her poor best to repair that insolent omission? No, her thoughts, we may be sure, were not greatly upon His titles just then. Was it, as some will have it, just a touching effort to show her gratitude for the resurrection of her brother Lazarus? Again no.

Happily we cannot miss the heart of the interpretation here,

*Mary the
consoler.*

John xii.
1-9.

Mark xiv.
3-9.

Matt. xxvi.
6-13.

John xii. 7.

Mark xiv.
8.Phil. iii.
10.

for Jesus Himself betrayed her secret, "Against the day of my burying hath she kept this," or as Mark renders it "She is come beforehand to anoint my body to the burying." In other words, Mary alone, of the entire circle of disciples, had really comprehended the truth of His thrice announced death and resurrection.

Mary alone knew that it would be a futile thing to go "very early on the first day morning," with costly ointments to pour upon a body which would already be risen. Mary alone, therefore, who began by learning at Jesus' feet, could at the last enter into "the fellowship of his sufferings." And of Mary Christ spoke the highest words of approval in the Bible, "She hath done what she could."

It was her silent way of saying, "I have understood that thou shalt suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes,

and be killed, and be raised again the third day."

And so Mary was not only more *for* Christ in the conversion of her friends, but she was more *to* Christ in the fellowship of silent sympathy, than any of His disciples,— and all this because she began right.

JESUS BEFORE PILATE

"And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required." LUKE xxiii. 24.

THE story of Pilate is both pitiful and shameful, ending in the most atrocious crime ever committed by man. It explains nothing to say that Pilate, like most Romans of the period, thought little of human suffering, and therefore did not weigh the agonies to be inflicted on Jesus, against the inconvenience of displeasing the Jews. He did not send Jesus to the cross lightly. The whole nature of the

Why?

Matt. xxvii.
11-31.

Mark xv.
1-15.

Luke xxiii.
1-25.

John xviii.
28-xix. 19.

Matt.
xxvii. 19.

John xix.
8, 12.

Luke xiii.
1.

Pilate.

man was stirred to its depths. He was profoundly agitated, unnerved, unmanned.

The Jews, who had more than once felt his strength, who remembered how ruthlessly he had mingled the blood of the Galileans with their sacrifices in the very temple itself, must have wondered at his unwonted infirmity of will that day, as all the world has wondered ever since.

Let us study Pilate's character: It is worth while surely to discover, if we can, what fatal defect made such conduct possible, what lack in him left him destitute of principle in the moment of his supreme testing. He was, remember, no common man. Rome had made him governor of one of her most turbulent and ungovernable provinces, and Rome did not put weak men in such places. The remarkable questions which he asked that day, show

him to have been a man of alert and vigorous mind. What, then, was the secret of his weakness, and so of his infamy?

I think he laid bare that secret when he asked his famous question, "What is truth?" What did he mean? For asking Jesus that question he has been called "jesting Pilate." I do not think Pontius Pilate was in a jesting mood that day, rather, in that question, half sadly, half contemptuously asked, the profound moral hopelessness of the Pagan world found a voice.

The great philosophers had come and gone before Christ was born, and they had not found ultimate truth. Their best systems not only contradicted each other at every vital point, but failed to touch the real problem of human life—destiny. Epicureans and Stoics remained, but men of action like Pilate turned wearily from their

*The pagan
hopeless-
ness.*

John xviii.
38.

¹ Cor. ii.
8, 9.

disputes about words, knowing that they had no power over conduct, character or destiny.

Look abroad over the world-empire of Rome that day and ask if there was any other place where it would have fared better with Jesus. Absolutely nowhere. Pilate was as good a representative of Gentilism as Annas and Caiaphas of Judaism. The world was morally dead and rotting. Humanity had had its long probation from Noah to Jesus, and had come to Annas, the Jew, and Pilate, the Gentile, and between them they crucified the Lord of Glory.

Pilate a type.

Pilate was a type of what, in these days, we call a man of the world. He and his kind, the real actors in the real drama of life, had come to believe that the pursuit of truth was vain; that no truly authoritative voice had ever spoken. And when that conviction enters a

human soul, the substance of character is gone, the man is henceforth a mere opportunist. If greatly tempted he will greatly fall; before God he is already fallen. How lightly men in our day deny the whole principle of authority in religion, so throwing every soul of man adrift without chart or compass, without point of departure or destination. Nay, it is devil's work to take away the authority of Christ and of the Bible, and will have its issue in fatal enervation of character,—in a race of Pilates.

THE ATONEMENT

“Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.” 1 COR. xv. 3.

THE Bible is a wonderful treasury of truth, containing history, biography, poetry, prophecy and ethics; it covers all time, and looks over into eternity; it deals

The central truth.

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with every part of the duty of man in relation to God, and in relation to his fellowmen; it reveals everything concerning human opportunity in relation to eternity. It is a book with an infinite fullness of truth, meeting every legitimate question of the soul, and answering all human need; and yet it has one truth that is central to all other truths, one truth which is the heart of it all, which is the one great emphatic and first thing in it all, and that is, "Christ died."

*"According to the
Scriptures."*

That Christ's death had a relation to sin, all admit. There is no question about that anywhere among Christians, but what that relation was has been the subject of endless theorizings and philosophizings. There is probably some element of truth in most of these theories; but the fact that "Christ died for our sins" not according to this or that theory, but "according to the scriptures," sends us to the

Scriptures for an interpretation of the cross.

From Genesis to Malachi there is an incessant reference to death for sin. In a certain sense it is the topic of the Old Testament, the scarlet thread that runs through all Scripture.

It is made perfectly clear that there is no possibility of remission for sin apart from sacrifice. No amendment of life; no change of attitude toward God; no sorrow for sin, no repentance, no faith, no works; nothing can possibly avail for sin, according to the universal testimony of the Old Testament Scriptures, but death. The New Testament again and again refers back to it, and always emphasizes that point.

It is stated in the ninth chapter of Hebrews, the sacrificial chapter, that "without shedding of blood there is no remission"; and the New Testament everywhere adopts

Gen. iv.
3-5.

Ex. xii. 12,
13.

Lev. iv.
27-35.

Isa. liii.
1-12.

Heb. ix. 22.

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1 Cor. v. 7.	Old Testament language and uses Old Testament incidents; "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us"; "This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Sacrifice for sin, in both Testaments, precedes forgiveness.
Matt. xxvi. 27, 28.	2. Death for sin, in both Testaments, is always vicarious. "It shall be accepted for him," is the formula; the offering takes the place of the offerer, and is invariably associated with the idea of substitution. "All we like sheep have gone astray . . . and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."
Isa. liii. 4-6.	3. Death for sin is perfectly efficacious, the offering is accepted for the offerer; his sin is forgiven him, and he is not required to do something in addition to that. God requires sacrifice for sin, but requires, as the condition of forgiveness,
1 Pet. ii. 24.	
Efficacious.	
Ex. xii. 13.	
John xii. 32, 33.	
Rom. v. 9, 10.	
2 Cor. v. 21.	
Eph. ii. 13.	

nothing more than sacrifice. We are not saved by Christ's death and something else, but by His death, and by that alone.

Our faith even adds nothing to that sacrifice, nor does it add anything to our own merit, any more than it is meritorious for a beggar to take the loaf of bread which you give him. He takes it because he needs it, and knows his need. He may love you for giving it to him, but that does not make the bread any more nutritious; out of gratitude he may joyfully serve you, but that does not affect the quality of the bread. It is the bread which satisfies his hunger.

Just as the sprinkled blood on the door posts, and that alone, secured the children of Israel from death, so the cross of Christ, and the cross alone, is our perfect security from judgment. It is necessary,—nothing but death will avail. It is vicarious or substitutional—a

Heb. ix.
11, 12, 26.

Heb. x.
10-17.

1 John i. 7.
Rev. i. 5.

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Acts iv. 12.

life for a life. It is perfectly efficacious—"For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

*Mysterious.*Rom. iii.
26, 27.

His death saves us. Beyond the plain teaching of Scripture we may not take one sure step. There are depths in the atonement which we may not fathom, depths which have not been revealed. The problem was God's problem; how could He be just and save a sinner? The atonement is God's solution of the problem; and while the facts are set before us with great plainness, surely all its mystery, all that lay in the Divine mind concerning it, is not revealed.

*The desolate cry.*Matt. xxvii.
46.

The mystery itself is put once for all in our Lord's desolate cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" That the sinless One was forsaken the cry itself proves, but why was He forsaken? All

theories of the atonement must start from that utterance, and must hold an adequate answer. If Jesus died as a spectacle, as a touching and supreme object lesson in altruism, as the law of life, and if there was no other meaning in His death, then His forsaking can mean nothing but the Divine condemnation of His act.

Then, if ever, the heavens should have opened over the cross, and the approving voice of God have resounded. But the blackness of midnight shrouded the unresponsive heavens. That explanation of the death of Christ is inadequate, unsatisfactory. It may be part of the truth, but obviously can not be all of the truth.

Without, then, trying to compass Godward and manward all the meanings of the cross of Christ, is it possible, upon the sure ground of Scripture, to say what, at least, is the central truth? I believe it is.

The central truth.

Luke xxiii.
39-43.

Rom. iii.
19.

2 Cor. v.
21.

Heb. ix. 26.

1 Pet. ii.
24.

Isa. liii. 6.

Christ did something that dreadful, blessed day, which made it possible for Him to say to a dying thief, "To day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Surely it was all *done for* this dying man. His own hands and feet were nailed to a cross; he could neither run nor work for God. The law condemned him because of his wicked life. He could not make restitution to those whom he had robbed, he could do nothing but cry, "Lord, remember me!"

What was that thing which Jesus did? The Scriptures answer, "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." "Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." He bore our sins in his own body on the tree. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we

have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

There is God's view of the cross, looking down. His problem in human salvation differed widely from the same problem, as we must solve it. How to be just, and yet a justifier of guilty sinners, was part of God's problem. That solved, there remained the problem of reconciliation. How shall guilty man be won to repentance and faith?

Now when God looked down upon the cross, He saw in it the solution of both problems. His holiness in judging the unbelieving was so vindicated that without lowering the sanction of His law He could pardon the believing. And there was also in the cross so great manifestation of His love that any heart, not fixed eternally in the love of sin, must be won by it.

Then there is man's view of the

*Reconcilia-
tion.*

Rom. iii.
24-26.

Rom. iii.
31.

John iii.
16.

1. John iv.
9, 10.

1 John iv.
19.

John iii.
14, 15.
Matt. xxvii.
46.

Matt. xxvi.
56.

Heb. ix. 26.

Isa. liii. 11.

Cleansing.

John xiii.
14.

cross, looking up. And if he looks aright, with true faith, he sees first of all a holy Being suffering, forsaken by God and man. He sees, in Him, full atonement for his sins, sees them judged, and forever put away by the sacrifice of Christ. He is satisfied, the law is satisfied, God is satisfied, Christ, seeing the travail of His soul, is satisfied, and the believing sinner is reconciled to God, through the death of His Son.

THE LAVER OF CLEANSING

“He . . . began to wash the disciples’ feet.” JOHN xiii. 5.

IT has often been suggested that this act of Jesus was performed to teach humility. That lesson is truly here, for He Himself said, “If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet,”

but it is incidental and by the way. No Oriental thought it a menial act to wash a guest's feet. Peter's astonishment, and refusal, were because the Divine Master took this act upon Himself. "Dost thou wash my feet?"

John xiii.
6.

It was an act of condescension for the Lord of Glory to perform this office; and doubtless therefore there is a blessed teaching of humility in our Lord's act, but that is not the central truth; the deepest meaning lies in the words "If I wash thee not thou hast no part with me."

After eating the Pascal supper, and before the institution of the memorial supper, which is one of the two Christian ordinances, Jesus rose from the table, and girding Himself began to wash the disciples' feet.

John xiii.
4, 5.

They received this with the usual stolidity until Peter was reached and protested "Dost thou wash

John xiii.
7.John xiii.
8.John xiii.
9.John xiii.
10.

my feet?" To this Jesus made answer "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." Our Lord's act was, then, symbolical. But this did not satisfy Peter: "Thou shalt never wash my feet" was his resolute reply. So Jesus disclosed the symbolical meaning of His act, "If I wash thee not thou hast no part with me."

And now Peter, understanding the act to be symbolic of purification from sin, goes quite too far, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." It is as if he said "Lord, if it is a question of cleansing I am all unclean." So again our Lord defines His act. "Jesus saith unto him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet." The underlying imagery is Oriental—of one who, in the public baths, has become clean, but whose feet, as he walks homeward through the filth of an Oriental city,

contract new defilements, and these must be washed away. And the application is obvious. The believer, cleansed by the blood of Christ from all guilt and penalty, needs also daily cleansing as he walks through an unclean world.

And there is here, also, a reference to the laver of the temple, which every Jew should have understood.

The priest, having offered sacrifice at the brazen altar, and proceeding thence to worship and communion in the holy place, must pause at the laver for the cleansing of hands and feet. Typically the sacrifice unto salvation had been offered at the brazen altar. Forgiveness and cleansing had been found there. But sin is not only guilt, it is defilement, and fellowship with God demands that this be removed. The cleansing work of Christ is two-fold; the cleansing by blood

The laver.

Ex. xxx.
17-21.

The double cleansing.

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unto full *salvation*, the cleansing by the Spirit through the word unto full *fellowship*.

Eph. v.
25-27.

“Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”

*Confession
and cleans-
ing.*

1 John i.
7-9.

“If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

In these passages the whole beautiful, but solemn truth of the feet-washing is opened, and this is that

truth: The Lord was about to institute the Eucharistic Supper, a supreme expression of communion and fellowship, and He would teach His loving, but careless disciples, the two-fold lesson—first, that His blood answered once for all, for the guilt of the believer. “He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet.” Secondly, He, the Holy One, could not admit to the privileges of His intimacy the believer who lived carelessly in unconfessed sin, and, that only He, Christ, could cleanse the defiled believer. Our part is confession, His part is to cleanse us from unrighteousness, and so to restore our interrupted fellowship. The saint’s confession is but putting the defiled feet into the hands of Jesus; He only can cleanse.

Luke xxii.
19, 20.

THE RESURRECTION

"He is not here: for he is risen, as he said." MATT. xxviii. 6.

Three vital truths.

NEXT to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, His resurrection is the most important event in human history. Indeed it may be said that three facts concerning Jesus Christ are so intimately related as to be of equal importance—His incarnation, His crucifixion and His resurrection.

Luke xix.
10.

Heb. x.
5-10.

John xii.
24, 32, 33.

John iii.
14.

Heb. ix.
22.

Matt. xii.
38-40.

Rom. iv.
23-25.

Without the incarnation neither the crucifixion nor the resurrection would have been possible; without the crucifixion the incarnation would have been of no avail for the salvation of a guilty world; without the resurrection the fact of the incarnation, and the efficacy of the crucifixion would have lacked the attestation to which Jesus Himself appealed as the final "sign."

That Jesus rose from the dead has been called the best attested fact in human history. It rests upon the following concurrent testimony:

First, the personal witnesses of the resurrection were numerous, they saw Him repeatedly, knew Him intimately, knew His stature, features, the tones of His voice. They were the holiest men the world ever saw, incapable of falsehood. They were incredulous, hard to be convinced. They bore witness to the fact immediately, when their testimony, if false, could have been refuted. Every true Christian is a personal witness that Jesus is alive.

The resurrection of Jesus proves His deity, "Declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:"

Completes our justification,

*The fact—
Jesus rose.*

1 Cor. xv.
5-8.

John xx.
14-29.

Matt.
xxviii. 16,
17.

Mark xvi.
9-11.

Luke xxiv.
10.

John xx.
24-28.

Rom. i. 4.

Rom. iv.
25.

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1 Thess.
iv. 14.

“Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification;”

Makes the believer's own resurrection sure, “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him;”

Eph. i. 22.

Gives to the Church a living head, “And gave him to be the head over all things to the Church;”

Heb. xiii.
20.

Restores to the sheep of God their great Shepherd, “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will;”

Heb. vii.
25.

Establishes His High Priestly office, “Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

Gives the sinning believer an Advocate, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father."

1. John ii.
1.

Gives the Church a blessed hope, "Looking for that blessed hope."

Titus ii. 13.

And the earth a coming King, "And the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

Luke i.
30-33.

Acts xv.
14-16.

Surely it is well that the tremendous fact of the resurrection of Christ should be restored, in our faith and motive, to its biblical prominence. No one can read the Acts and the Epistles without seeing that the resurrection was, next to the cross, the central theme of the Apostolic preaching.

Preach the resurrection.

To-day both the incarnation and the resurrection are denied by men who claim that such denial is possible within evangelical lines; but

Modern denial.

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¹ Cor. xv.
17.

the Scriptures say that if Jesus did not rise there is no resurrection, our faith is vain, we are yet in our sins, and they who sleep in Jesus are perished.

¹ Tim. i.
20.
² Tim. ii.
17, 18.

No wonder that around this truth the Apostles, by the Spirit, threw the sternest sanctions, as in the case of Hymenæus who, erring at this vital point, was delivered unto Satan that he might learn not to blaspheme.

¹ Pet. i. 3.

Perhaps Peter best expresses the effect of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, when he says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again into a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

That it was the re-birth of Christianity is, of course, patent to the reader of the Gospels and the Acts. Nothing is more evident than that Christianity went into the tomb of

Joseph of Arimathea, with the body of Christ.

Luke xxiv.
19.

But something occurred which suddenly lifted that group of sorrowing men and women into an ecstasy of faith and joy, and they said it was the coming again to life and activity of their Lord and Master.

The fact that Christianity exists to-day proves that Jesus rose, but the final and unanswerable proof is the appearance of Jesus to Saul.

The final proof.

Harnack, the greatest of patristic scholars, contends that Saul was converted within ten years after the crucifixion. The resurrection had been, during all those years, the very central subject of controversy. This means that upon the denial of the resurrection all the dogmatism of Saul's strong, positive nature had concentrated.

The slow years passed. Then, not to some credulous, wonder-loving peasant or myth-dreamer, but

Acts. xxvi.
12-20.

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to the very arch-denier himself, scholar, thinker, man of action, man of strong tenacity of belief, of inflexible will—the unanswerable demonstration was given.

The man who, after this, doubts the fact of the resurrection is not accessible to conviction by proof concerning any fact which he does not wish to believe.

*What the
risen Christ
is doing.*

Eph. i. 22,
23.

The ministry of the risen Christ is in three parts: He is Shepherd of the sheep of God, according to Psalm xxiii. and John x.; the High Priest of the redeemed, according to John xvii. and Heb. vii.-viii.; the Head of the Church, “Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

As such He baptizes with the Spirit all who believe, thus uniting them to His body, endues them with gifts, guides them in service, renewing their life from His own, and procures for them the mercies

¹ Cor. xii.
12, 13.

¹ Cor. xii.
8-11.

Acts xvi. 7.

Heb. vii.
25.

needful for a pilgrim body in the world.

Never can the believer know the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, nor enter into spiritual rest and joy, until he comprehends, in some measure at least, this three-fold resurrection work of Christ.

There is a disproportionate attention given to the Jewish earth-ministry of our Lord during three and one half years in Judea and Galilee; and a consequent neglect of the mighty and varied ministry of the ascended Christ, which has already lasted over nineteen hundred years. "This ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone."

A caution.

Matt. x.
5, 6.

Matt. xv.
24.

Rom. xv. 8.

JESUS APPEARS TO MARY

"Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou?" JOHN xx. 15.

The ministry of comfort

John x. 3.

Luke xxiv.
34.

Luke xxiv.
13-30.

John xx.
19, 20.

THE ministry of comfort—that is the meaning of this incident. The great Shepherd of the sheep has been brought again from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant and He begins His shepherd work just outside the empty tomb by calling "His own sheep by name." Presently He will go after His straying sheep, Peter. Then He will reëstablish the faith of two wavering sheep, and then He will go to the fold and quiet the hearts of His excited and disturbed sheep.

But He begins with the sheep who weeps. It illustrates Jesus' method of comfort.

Tear blinded.

John xx.
11-15.

We have here a tear-blinded disciple. Jesus is there, but she sees Him but dimly through wet eyes,

and supposes Him to be the gardener. She was not so very far wrong after all. Jesus is everything, including Gardener. "Ye are God's tilled ground," says the apostle; and so the divine Gardener ploughs us, breaking up the hard fallow-ground of our hearts; passing the harrow over the sown seed, and then most tenderly watering it with the dew of Hermon, and calling the south wind to blow upon His garden "that the spices thereof may flow out," and then, forgetting in the harvest joy the hard day of the plow and the harrow, we are ready to cry, "Let my beloved come into his garden and eat his pleasant fruits." Mary was not far wrong when she supposed Him to be the gardener, but that morning He had put His hand to the shepherd staff and not to the plow.

But Mary was weeping and she could not see Him for tears. That

¹ Cor. iii.
9.

Hosea x.
12.

Psa.
cxxxi. 3.

Song iv.
16.

Psa. xxiii.
4.

*The bad
use of
sorrow.*

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is the bad use of sorrow, to let it hide the Consoler. The right use of sorrow makes of tears a thousand lenses through which Jesus is drawn nearer.

*How Jesus
consolers.*

Matt. v. 4.

*Why weep-
est thou?*

John xx.
15.

Matt. xiv.
12.

Notice the method of the divine consolations. Be sure it is written that we may study it. Be sure the method has not changed, nor ever will change; so that if we see how Jesus comforted Mary Magdalene we shall understand how He will seek to comfort us when we sorrow.

First, He asks a question, "Why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?" But did not Jesus know? Oh, yes, He knew; but He also knew something else, He knew that the beginning of comfort for Mary would be to tell it all to Him. When John Baptist was slain his disciples "took up the body and buried it, and went and told Jesus." There was wisdom beyond words in that. A grief is half assuaged when

it is told, and if it is told to Jesus it is already half sanctified.

And, secondly, Jesus called her by name. Consider the inner meaning of that. What was it but the assurance of *personal* interest, *personal* sympathy? If Mary was a subject of a kingdom working automatically by means of self-enforcing laws, that is one thing. If she was exalted to be the personal friend of the King, that is quite another thing. If Jesus is touched by, and takes account of, only the aggregate of human sorrow in a collective kind of way—so many millions of human tears reported today as against so many on the corresponding date a twelvemonth ago—that is one thing. But if Jesus has time to think of Mary's tears as if there were no other weeping one on earth, time to put her "tears in a bottle," time to say, "Mary," that is quite another thing. Ah, if we will only "tell Jesus" He will

"Mary!"

John xv.
15.

Psa. lvi. 8.

*Comfort
through
work.*

*John xx.
17.*

*"Rab-
boni!"
1 Cor. i.
3,*

find means to prove that He thinks upon us!

And, thirdly, Jesus gave her work to do. "Go to my brethren and say—" That is a great medicine for weeping eyes—to "go, say" some glad thing to others who are cast down. It is not the whole cure, but it is a necessary part of it.

So comfort begins when we tell Jesus; grows mightily when He makes us see how intimate and personal His love is, and is complete when we go to bring gladness to other sad hearts.

THE BAPTISM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

"The Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." ACTS x. 44.

*Three
turning
points in
Acts.*

THERE are three great pivotal events in the book of Acts, the descent of the Holy Spirit at

Pentecost, which was the long-predicted advent of a Person of the Godhead; the conversion of Saul, which gave to the Church Christ's elect apostle for organizing institutional Christianity, and for receiving and recording the great truths concerning the mystery of the Church; and the opening of the door of the kingdom to the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius.

The first preaching of the Gospel was, as Christ had directed, to the Jews in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria. It was therefore preaching of a peculiar type. The Jews were the children of the covenant, and by their birth and circumcision already in covenant relation with God. They believed in and worshipped Jehovah, the true God, but they had crucified their long-expected Messiah. Of them, therefore, was demanded repentance, "a change of mind" as to Jesus and

Joel ii. 28,
29.

Matt. iii.
11.

Acts ii.
1-4.

Acts ix.
1-6.

Acts xxvi.
16.

Matt. xvi.
19.

Acts x.
1-48.

The Jews.
Acts i. 8.

Gen. xvii.
10-17.

Acts iii.
25, 26.

Acts iii.
19-26.

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His Messiahship, and faith in Him *as such*.

*The Gen-
tiles.*

Eph. ii. 12.

Rom. iii. 9,
19, 20.

Gal. iii. 29.

*The power
of the keys.*

But the Gentile position was wholly different. The Gentiles were "without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world."

To the Gentiles, therefore, a message calling them to faithfulness to a covenant into which they had never been brought, would have been no glad tidings. For the Gentile world the Gospel must be, as it is, wholly of grace; as, too, only grace can avail for the Jew under condemnation of the law. No Gentile ever finds himself within the covenanted mercies of God until he has believed on the Lord Jesus Christ.

To Peter (not to his so-called successors, for an apostle can have

no successors,) was given the unique privilege of the keys, and he fulfilled his office once for all when he opened the kingdom to the Jews at Pentecost, and when he opened the kingdom to the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius.

Peter's sermon on the latter occasion is concerning Jesus Christ, Whom God sent, preaching peace. He rehearses the facts of Christ's baptism with the Holy Ghost, His brief ministry of blessing, His crucifixion and resurrection, and the great message of salvation to "whosoever believeth in Him." And when this saving message had been announced that event occurred which marks a distinct and vitally important advance in the truth concerning the Holy Spirit. "The Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." It is needless to say that the hearing referred to was the hearing of faith.

Matt. xvi.
19.

Acts ii.
36-38.

Acts x.
34-48.

Peter's
sermon.

Acts x.
34-43.

*The Holy
Spirit and
Gentile
converts.*

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A new thing.

Acts x. 44.

The point specially to be observed is, that for the first time the believing hearer was immediately baptized with the Holy Spirit, and that this occurred the very first time the Gospel was preached to Gentiles.

So long as the Gospel was confined within Jewish bounds, *an interval* occurred between conversion and the baptism with the Spirit. And not only so, but in some way, by prayer, or the laying on of hands, *the mediation of the apostles* was required.

Acts xi.
15-18.

1 Cor. xii.
12, 13, R.V.

Eph. i. 13,
14.

1 Cor. vi.
19.

Acts xix.
1-6.

But, from the moment when Peter preached grace to Gentile hearers, neither interval, mediation, seeking, nor any supplementary or additional act of faith stands between the receiving of Christ as a Saviour, and the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

The case of the disciples of John the Baptist, whom Paul found at Ephesus, constitutes no exception.

Their lack of the baptism with the Spirit was not due to their ignorance of the advent of the Spirit at Pentecost, but to their ignorance that *Christ* had come. They were still looking for "one who should come after" John the Baptist. In other words, they were not believers on a crucified Christ. Furthermore, they were Jews, and so, after their conversion, Paul mediated their baptism with the Spirit.

Acts xix. 4.

The vital fact then remains, that from the opening of the door to the Gentiles, faith on the Lord Jesus Christ and the baptism with the Spirit are coincident facts. Not once does Paul, or Peter, or James, or John, or Jude exhort believers to "seek the baptism with the Spirit." Every other imaginable exhortation they do utter, but never this. It is simply incredible that an experience so important should have been forgotten.

"Yield,"
"not,
"Seek."

Rom. vi.
16, 19.

Rom. viii.
13-17.

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Eph. iii.
3-10.

1 Cor. xii.
12, 13.

Eph. i. 13.

*But not all
are filled.*

1 Cor. xiii.
7-20.

Eph. v.
18-20.

Acts iv.
31-33.

Eph. v. 18.

The Apostle Paul, to whom was committed the revelation of Church truth, not only does not exhort or command believers to seek the Spirit's baptism, but he assures believers that by one Spirit they are baptized into one body, and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. That "upon believing" they were "sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise."

The modern confusion (apparently hopeless) on this point is due to confusing together two distinct operations of the Spirit, the baptism and the filling. The function of the former is to unite the believer to the body of Christ, and to impart gifts for service. The result of the filling is blessing in life and power in service. What Christians need is not the baptism (which they have) but the filling with the Spirit, to which they are exhorted.

And the filling comes through confession and prayer.

Acts iv.
29-31.

THE CONVERSION OF SAUL

“And he said, Who art thou, Lord?”
Acts ix. 5.

THE conversion of Saul is one of the turning points in human history, for it brought to the service of Christ the man who, under God, has most powerfully affected human life and thought during the last two thousand years. In the providence of God it was reserved to this Jew of Tarsus to act a part in the secondary work of redemption, greater not only than that of any other man, but than that of all other men, for it was given to him to receive, at first hand from God, and to communicate to the world, those amazing revelations which are embodied in his fourteen Epistles.

An epoch-making man.

Eph. iii.
1-11.

Gal. i. 11,
12.

1 Cor. xi.
23.

1 Cor. ii.
10-13.

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*Distinctive
revelations
through
Paul.*

Matt. xvi.
18.

John xvi.
12.

1 Cor. xv.
1-3.

John xii.
24.

Luke xxii.
20.

Matt. xxvi.
28.

Apart from the writings of Paul we should know nothing of the origin, relationships, distinctive calling, service and destiny of the Church of God.

Of these things Christ said nothing. He simply announced that He would build His Church, leaving all to be revealed after His departure. These were among the "many things" which He had to say to His disciples, but which they could not then bear.

Moreover, to Paul chiefly, were committed those further revelations which explain and apply the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Of the meaning of that work our Lord gave profound and foundational intimations. His death should be like a corn of wheat, falling into the ground and imparting its life to countless corns of wheat.

His sacrifice was to establish "the new covenant in my blood," and was to be "shed for many for

the remission of sins." But He left it for the mighty ministry of the Spirit, through Paul, to develop these generic intimations into the great doctrines of justification, reconciliation and redemption. Christ planted the acorn in the great teachings of the Gospels, the tree is the Epistles.

And just here lies the essential folly of the so-called "back to Christ" movement—the attempt to construct a sufficient organic and creedal Christianity out of the words of our Lord alone, ignoring the apostolic revelations. It is a movement in the face of His own express declaration that in departing from the world He was leaving an incomplete revelation. "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth."

The conversion of Saul has also a great typical interest. Saul, "an

John xvi.
12, 13.

Saul's conversion typical.

Phil. iii. 5.

Hebrew of the Hebrews," was converted by the personal ministry of the ascended and glorified Christ. He will shine, as a star, in no crown of mortal evangelist. His conversion was wrought by the Lord in glory. In this Paul is a type, for the future conversion of Israel will be the alone work of the glorified Christ at His second coming.

Ezek. xx.
34, 38.Zech. xiii.
1-6.Rom. xi.
25-27.*Saul con-
victed.*Acts vii.
54-60.

Acts ix. 5.

We may well believe that from the moment of Stephen's martyrdom, when Saul saw and consented to the death, by stoning, of a young man with the face of an angel, a face over which God had spread the covering whiteness of the Shekinah; saw the cruel stones crush the life out of that holy body, and thought that so the truth of God was being maintained, and God glorified; the whole being of Saul was shaken by profound questionings. The very violence of his conduct proves this. He was "kicking

against the goads " of an awakened conscience.

What Stephen saw that day was the "glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God," and the vision was more glorious and comforting than the stones were painful, so that the death of the first martyr was, perhaps, the happiest death that ever ended a human life. The compensations of heaven infinitely outweigh any possible suffering into which the path of duty may lead the child of God. Whatever the deprivation, whatever the loss, whatever the pain of that path, one moment of heaven more than compensates for all.

Apart, however, from these great historical and typical considerations, the two questions of the stricken man on the Damascus road: "Who art thou, Lord?" and "What wilt thou have me to do?" are the keynote of the whole

Acts vii.
56.

Rom. viii.
17, 18.

2 Cor. iv.
17, 18.

*The key-note
of Paul's life.*

Acts ix.
5, 6.

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Phil. iii.
10.

2 Tim. i.
12.

1 Cor. xiii.
12.

1 Cor. xi.
23.

Acts xi.
4, 5.

Acts xxiii.
11.

2 Cor. xii.
1-4.

life and service of the great apostle to the Gentiles, for the two consuming passions of Paul were to know Christ and to obey Him. "That I may know him" he writes to the Philippians, as of his supreme desire, and this well on toward the close of his great ministry. He could, indeed, say, "I know whom I have believed," but it was that knowledge "in part," "as through a glass darkly," which could never satisfy the burning love of his heart.

He had been repeatedly in personal conference with the Lord, had been caught up to heaven and heard unspeakable things, and this was but as fuel to the flame of Paul's longing to know his Lord. And with the passion to know, was an equal passion to obey, and this is the two-fold secret of Paul's unparalleled service, and the key to all noblest discipleship.

ALMOST PERSUADED

"Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." *Acta xxvi. 28.*

THE address of Paul before Agrippa is at once the model and the despair of the gospel preacher. Perfect in fact, simplicity, dignity and rhetoric, it also is the highest known instance of that perfect art in public discourse which conceals art. Some one in Rufus Choate's hearing called this address, "Paul's defence before Agrippa."

The perfect sermon.

"Defence," said the great advocate, "why, sir, defence was not in Paul's thought. His one purpose was to make a Christian of Agrippa, and he nearly succeeded."

Addressing one who knew and believed the prophets, Paul grounds his appeal upon the prophetic testi-

Acta xxvi. 3, 27.

Acta xxvi. 6, 7, 22, 23.

Acts xxvi.
8.

Acts ii.
32.

*The appeal
to reason.*

Acts xxvi.
8.

mony. The essential thing is that he shall move Agrippa from a mere intellectual belief in the prophets, to an actual and personal belief in Him of whom the prophets speak. For this purpose he boldly takes his stand upon the fact of the resurrection of Christ. If Agrippa comes to believe that, all his other difficulties must logically vanish, for if Jesus of Nazareth was raised from the dead, then His tremendous claims are authenticated; He is indeed the Christ, the Son of the living God. He chooses a two-fold method, the appeal to reason and the appeal to experience.

The appeal to reason he condenses into a perfectly unanswerable question: "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?"

The reanimation of a dead body is indeed a stupendous miracle, but

by no means an incredible miracle if God is brought in. To say that all things are possible with God is to state a truism. But though Agrippa must admit that God *could* raise the dead Christ, it might still be a question whether He actually *did*. Paul meets this with his personal testimony. Paul knows that God raised Christ from the dead because he, Paul, has spoken with the risen Christ.

There is something equally simple and sublime in Paul's confidence in the convincing power of his personal testimony. It is a well founded confidence, always. Truth has an accent, a convincingness, of her own. The great lack, the greatest lack, of present-day Christianity is the absence of a clear, definite, personal testimony, based on personal experience. The preacher who knows and believes the prophets, and who says "none other things than those which the prophets and

*The appeal
to experi-
ence.*
Acts ix.
4-6.

*The power
of testi-
mony.*

Acts i. 8.

John iv.
42.

Acts iv. 13.

John ix.
25.

Moses did say should come," who is in personal fellowship with the risen Christ, and who has a vital personal experience, will never lack fruit of his ministry.

The uses of vision.

Acts xxvi.
19, 20.

Acts xvi.
9, 10.

But the heart of things here is Paul's obedience to the heavenly vision. A "vision," in Scripture, is essentially an unseen verity made real. The sinner to whom the cross becomes, even for a moment, an objective reality, has seen a heavenly vision. The saint who sees in Scripture a higher, sweeter, holier life than he is living, has had a heavenly vision. And visions are things demanding obedience. Never are they given for enjoyment merely. In a very real sense the whole story of every powerful and saintly life, every life which grows in saintliness and power, may be written in that one word, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."

THE NEW LIFE

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." PHIL. iv. 13.

THE Christian position in grace, "accepted in the beloved," demands a corresponding *experience*. The law demanded a righteous life, grace demands a spiritual life.

Salvation has its source in the heart of God, and reaches us on the principle of grace, or unmerited favor, through faith alone, without works.

Indeed when one thinks of the depth from which the sinner is taken, and of the height to which the saint is raised, one wonders that any sane being could ever have supposed that works could have any place in such a salvation. One says with Zophar, "It is high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?"

The new ethic.
Eph. i. 6.
Matt. v.
3-11.
Gal. v.
22-23.
Eph. iv.
30-32.
Phil. iv.
4-9.

John iii.
16.
Eph. ii.
4-9.

Eph. ii.
1-3.

Eph. i.
3-13.

Job xi. 8.

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Eph. ii. 4.

Man is helpless and hopeless in death and sin. Man cannot lift himself out of death into fellowship and oneness with Christ in the heavenlies, "but God who is rich in mercy" can.

The ethic super-human.

Col. iii. 1-4.

Eph. iv.
1, 2.

Eph. vi. 12.

Gal. v. 16,
17.

It has been objected to Christianity that it requires of the believer a superhuman type of living. The objection is well taken—it does. No mere morality, however high, no most scrupulous observance of the outward things of the religious life, as Bible reading, prayer, church-going, almsgiving, will fill out the demand of the Christian ethic. It is a heavenly standard for earthly living. The whole environment is hostile to that standard; Satan and his hosts are determined the believer shall not realize it in his own experience; nay, the believer's own flesh rebels against it.

Here comes the peril: The be-

liever will be tempted to say, "This is an ideal merely. It is not seriously meant to be fully realized. It helps just as the moon helps if I make it my target, for while I shall not strike the moon, I shall shoot higher than I should if I made the barn roof my target."

But the type of Christian experience which we have in the Epistles is not set forth as an unattainable ideal. It is indeed above man's natural capacity, but with the super-human demand is given a super-human enablement, and millions of God's dear children, from Paul down to this day, have lived in "steadfastness," "unity," "helpfulness," constant unbroken joy in the Lord, "moderation," utter deliverance from care, with mind and heart garrisoned in the peace of God. Millions have lived in the things that are "true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report," and so have known the constant

1 Cor. xv.
58.

Eph. iv. 3.

Phil. iv. 5.

Phil. iv. 6,
7.

Phil. iv. 8.

Phil. iv. 9.

presence of the God of peace. They, like Paul, have learned in whatsoever state they are, therein to be content.

Phil. iv. 11.

And they have lived this type of life because they have learned the secret, and that secret is, I can do all things through Christ my strength. Along with the supernatural and humanly unattainable standard of Christian living goes, under grace, a supernatural and altogether adequate enablement.

Gal. v. 16,
17.

The Christian is more than a forgiven sinner with a high ideal. He has received the new birth, and so been made a partaker of the Divine nature; Jesus Christ, the Lord of Life, has imparted to him His own life, and has sent, to indwell this child of God, His own Divine Spirit.

John iii.
16.

2 Pet. i. 4.

John x. 28.

Rom. viii.
2.

Nay, more. At the right hand of the Father, exalted to be a High Priest, is the believer's risen Lord,

Who, "ever liveth to make intercession" for him. Gifted with all authority in heaven and in earth, He watches over and commands the providences of the believer's life. Having Himself suffered, being tempted, He is able also to succor them that are tempted. Tenderly regardful of human weakness, He is "touched," not angered, with the feeling of our infirmities. Nothing necessary to the Christian's victory, power and peace has been forgotten.

And the one broad distinction between Christian and Christian is that some are seeking by self-effort to attain to the standard of right Christian living, while others, in utter self-distrust, are yielding themselves to the great supernatural enablements, which are the birthright of every believer. Some are "going about to establish their own righteousness," others are "submitting themselves unto the

Heb. vii.
25.

Matt.
xxviii. 18.

Heb. iv. 15.

Rom. x. 3.

Rom. viii.
2-4.

righteousness of God." The first are ever hoping to fulfil the righteousness of the law, and ever failing; the second, walking in the Spirit, have the blessed experience of the righteousness of the law fulfilled "in" (not "by") them.

The mystery of suffering.

Job xlvi. 3.

THE FIERY FURNACE

"Who is that God who shall deliver you out of my hands?" DAN. iii. 15.

ONE of the mysteries of life is the suffering of the good. Why should the best of God's servants have affliction upon affliction? It was the problem of Job. The troubled patriarch found it insoluble down to the very last chapter. It is true that it seemed no problem at all to Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. Ah, they knew! The very affliction of afflictions, is that the petty good al-

ways know. It is our peril that we shall in very perplexity and brokenness of heart accept their small theories.

The story of the three Hebrews may help us against that hour when in our sorrow and pain we shall believe Bildad and the others, and add to our sufferings that of a painful search for sins. For Bildad and his sort always believe that we, whose tears are falling, are hypocrites. Poor Job knew himself to be no hypocrite, and yet he could find no better explanation of his misery than that God was angry with him.

Job xvi. 11.

God is not angry.

It is the tragedy of suffering that stricken saints torment themselves with the notion that God is angry with them. But Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were the best men, save Daniel, whom God had on earth. It was the path of obedience, not of disobedience, which led

Dan. iii.
1-30.

Heb. xii.
5-12.

them to the door of the furnace. The Son of God Himself trod that pathway. Doubtless there are chastisements for the wilfully disobedient child. Such cases present no mystery.

No, the Divine wrath does not explain the suffering of Christians. Take an illustration: A ton of pig iron is worth about \$4.00, a ton of watch springs about \$30,000, and a ton of Damascus blades about \$100,000. And the springs and the blades were all pig iron once. But there is no rose-strewn pathway over which pig iron may saunter into springship and bladehood, nor may pig iron be smitten into perfection of edge and temper by one fierce touch of the furnace. Again and again it must be bathed in flame, and again and again beaten upon the anvil.

But the smith is not angry with the pig iron. His blows are not the blows of wrath, nor his thrust-

ings into the furnace the tokens of judgment. A sinner becomes a saint by faith, but he does not become saintly in one day, nor by one testing.

Twenty years before, these men had stood with Daniel under test, to determine whether they would be loyal to God and conscience in small things. Now they are ready for a more fundamental and profound testing.

The issue now is between the worship of gold and the worship of God. It is the most practical, constant and universal of all tests. It is a choice which every man in every age must make. In our day the matter is usually thought to be one susceptible of compromise—God is to be worshipped on the first day of the week, and the image of gold on the other six. But for ever and ever Jesus Christ has stamped upon that compromise the word impos-

Heb. x. 10.

Heb. xii.
5-10.

Dan. i.
6-15.

Dan. iii.
1-12.

*Gold or
God?*

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Matt. vi.
24.

sible. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

Here are three men who are minded to make no such compromise. They elect to stand erect before the glittering image, and to bow to nothing less than God. So the furnace is heated for them. It will be heated for any man in any age who absolutely refuses to bow to any idol—financial, social, ecclesiastical, political.

Victory.

Dan. iii.
16.

Now note the compensations: First of all, God gifted these men with noble composure and courage. Their heads were unbowed by fear. "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer thee in this matter." I think that passage one of the finest things in the Bible. It is God's gift to the erect of soul. And this superb courage and poise is itself an exceedingly great reward, more worth than any gift purchasable with gold. It is al-

ways so. Let Moses elect affliction with the people of God rather than the riches in Egypt, and instantly it can be written of him, "Not fearing the wrath of the king." "Knowest thou not," said Pilate, "that I have power to crucify thee?" Note the untroubled serenity of the answer: "Thou couldst have no power at all against me except it were given thee from above."

And, most wonderful of all, the furnace proved to be the very audience chamber of the King of kings. "Lo," said Nebuchadnezzar, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and the form of the fourth is like unto the Son of God." Christ is never so near as when we suffer.

Heb. xi. 27.

John xix.
10, 11.Dan. iii.
25.

DAVID AND GOLIATH

"I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts." *1 SAM. xvii. 45.*

A great scene.

*1 Sam. xvii.
40-50.*

THIS is the scene that the artists love, and the children. A thousand times the painters have set their hand to the portrayal of the great deed which David wrought that day. When the painter has been ignoble he has given us David's exultation over the dead giant. When he has been of larger simpler mind, he has shown us the ruddy boy in his joy of battle —the straight out right arm which has just launched the smooth stone, the intent gaze awaiting the sure result. And however pictured, the children have understood.

Is it more than a child's tale, though a true? Is there any moral here, or fixed principle worth our learning? Is it not to be found in David's *motive*, in the cause

which nerved his hand and set his heart aflame with holy zeal and rage?

“I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel whom thou hast defied . . . that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel . . . and all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth.”

“For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?”

¹ Sam. xvii.
45-47.

¹ Sam. xvii.
26.

There is need that this high note shall be struck again in the service of God. More and more the motive in service comes to be purely humanitarian. The Gospel must be preached and missions maintained that humanity, which is in sore distress with the consequences of sin, may “have the benefits of Christian civilization.” Oppression is everywhere, disease, ignorance and degradation, and the

Motive in service.

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Gospel emancipates, heals, enlightens and uplifts. "Earth," we say, "needs a better ideal, a loftier ethic." The human mind lies fallow, it must be broken up that better seed may grow. The millions of heathendom are enslaved to superstition and ignorance, and the Gospel must be preached because where the Gospel goes these things diminish or vanish.

The Goliaths of intemperance and impurity must be fought and slain, because such an appalling proportion of the population find drunkards' graves, or are sacrificed to human lust. From these evils humanity must be redeemed and protected.

*Put God
first.*

But the humanitarian appeal, the humanitarian motive, are losing force. We do not care intensely any more about the girl babies suffocated in the mud of the Ganges, the child-widow, sorrowful under

her palm tree, or the procession staggering on to the grave of the drunkard.

Might it not be worth while once more to think of God in all this; of His rights in every human being—rights outraged by all this sin and shame? Might it not be worth trying, at least, to reëstablish as a motive the exaltation of the Lord in this world? Might it not be well to begin again to look upon sin not merely, nor primarily, as something which is hurtful to man, but an insult to God?

Suppose we could enthrone again as the central motive in missions Paul's great word: "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, BUT UNTO HIM who died for them and rose again."

The men, in and out of Scripture,

John xxi.
15-17.

2 Cor. v.
14, 15.

Heb. xi.
1-40.

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Num. xiv.
13-16.

who have taken David's ground, who have put God and His great name first, and whose passion has been to make that name known and exalted in the earth, are the men who have prevailed in prayer and won notable victories in the conflicts of faith.

*Genesis
and human
nature.*

JOSEPH IN PRISON

"And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison." GEN. xxxix. 20.

GENESIS is at once profoundly artless, and artlessly profound. Its narratives are level to the comprehension of a child and yet uncover the secrets of the human heart. There is in the episode of Joseph's imprisonment the common play of human motive, and the mutability of human affairs. When Shakespeare wrote, "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned," he was not thinking of the hatred of

a base woman in ancient Egypt for a pure-hearted man, but only of a permanent fact in human experience.

The story would not have been worth preservation, nor would it have been preserved, had it not held a great spiritual truth, the key of which is "But the Lord was with Joseph." An especial presence is, of course, meant.

In the sense of His everywhere-ness, God is "with" the entire creation, but in Scripture this phrase stands for a *particular* nearness, and is vitally connected with the most striking events.

The Lord was "with" Jacob despite his self-confidence, and fleshly ways, until He had made him "Israel, a prince with God." He was "with" Moses, delivering him from the wrath of Pharaoh, conferring upon him the great offices of prophet, lawgiver, interces-

Permanent values.

Gen. xxxix.
2, 21.

"Immanuel."

Isa. vii. 14.

Luke i. 28.

Gen. xxviii.
15.

Gen. xxxii.
27-28.

Josh. i. 5.

Josh. iii. 7.

sor and leader. He was "with" Joshua, magnifying him in the sight of all Israel, making him a great conqueror and deliverer.

This unseen Presence gives the clue to the interpretation of the Biblical biographies—of the book of Esther, for instance, where Jehovah is not mentioned, but where His presence does everything—and to the true philosophy of all history.

Divine providence.

Acts xii.
1-10.Acts xvi.
26.

It is this which men of faith call divine providence. No better illustration at once of the significance of the phrase, and of the reality of the fact, can be found than this story of Joseph's imprisonment and deliverance. And the first and most important element in the great fact of the divine interference is, that commonly Providence works along perfectly natural lines. Sometimes indeed an angel is sent to deliver a Peter, or an earthquake to

help a Paul, but usually the hand of God is veiled in the seemingly natural.

Joseph, a good man, is in prison for loyalty to right, and the problem is Joseph's deliverance. Two upper servants of an oriental king incur his displeasure and are cast into the same prison. Nothing could be more commonplace! Such things happen every day. But this most commonplace circumstance is sufficient for the divine use.

The imprisonment of the chief butler was, indeed, to be the means of Joseph's enlargement and exaltation, but yet we read "Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgat him." How long did Joseph have to wait upon the defective memory of the chief butler? "And it came to pass at the end of two full years."

Ah, there is the bitterness of the mystery! "Two full years!"

Gen. xl.
1-23.

Gen. xl. 23

Gen. xli. 1.

Hope deferred.

“ Is this,” a troubled servant asks, “ all that it means, ‘ The Lord was with Joseph ? ’ ” How often Joseph himself may have wondered if indeed Jehovah were God in Egypt, also if there were not truth in the Gentile conception of local and limited gods. He may have wondered if indeed Jehovah thought upon and loved him.

Two years pass slowly in a prison. We read how terribly a prison seems to have tried the faith of John the Baptist, when he asked “ Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another ? ” The caged eagle of the wilderness grew heart-sick ! Oh, the mysteries of the silences, of the delays of God !

Matt. xi. 3.

Delayed answers.

The delay of His judgment upon the evils which are desolating the earth, the delay of His answer to prayer, the delay of His deliverance of the righteous out of their affliction, the delay of the first advent of the Lord Jesus Christ

through slow centuries of evil and darkness, the delay of His second advent—all these are mysteries.

Why should creation be left to groan in the bondage of corruption; the saint to groan “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body;” and the Spirit to groan in His temple of the natural body?

Why does the Prince of Peace suffer still the horror of war on that earth which He has made and redeemed? Why does the Lord of Life permit still that earth to be ridged with graves and drenched with tears?

Over all this, and within all this abides much that is mysterious. But we are not left altogether without light. The two years of the chief butler’s forgetfulness and of Joseph’s continued imprisonment were not, be sure, valueless or wasted years in Joseph’s spiritual and intellectual history.

Rom. viii.
22-26.

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He heard much, thought deeply, communed, we may be sure, much with the God of Israel.

Prov. xxv.
4.

He was being tempered in the fire of adversity, that he might be a fit instrument, in the hand of His God, when the time for his deliverance and exaltation should come.

Isa. xl. 31.

What is our attitude during God's delays? We may use the time in wicked accusings, or in fretful repinings, or we may use the time in that restful waiting upon the Lord of which the prophet says: "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint."

DAVID AND JONATHAN

"And Jonathan loved him as his own soul." 1 SAM. xviii. 1.

THE love of Jonathan and David was not only beautiful in itself, but affords a beautiful illustration of the love-character. "Love seeketh not her own."

Jonathan was next in order of succession to the throne of Israel, and every motive of pride and ambition would urge him, if not to assist his father's efforts to remove David, at least to do nothing to hinder those efforts. The upright, brave, God-fearing son of a bad father, he may well have felt an honest desire to reign, that he might redeem the family name from the shame put upon it by his father's tyranny and misgovernment.

Brought up in expectation of the throne, accustomed to think of himself as the heir, forming as so noble

The supreme test of love.

1 Cor. xiii. 5.

1 Sam. xviii. 1-4.

1 Sam. xv. 26-28.

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a nature must have done many plans for the good of his people, he is suddenly told that the royal line of Saul is set aside.

For this he seems to have had nothing but the word of aged Samuel, but Jonathan knew that Samuel was God's spokesman to Israel, and that the disinheritance was a message from God.

Then David appears, does his great exploit, and against all the pleadings of self-interest love knit the heart of Jonathan to the heart of David. Jonathan was a mightier conquest for David than the overthrow of boasting Goliath. The very crown of Israel was not a greater trophy than the love of Jonathan.

¹ Sam. xviii. 3.

Rom. v. 5.

John xvi.
27.

John xiii. 1.

The most precious gift of God is love—His own love, “For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came from God;” the love of His Son, who, “Having

loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end;” the love of the Spirit, “For the love of the Spirit that ye strive together with me;” and precious human love, the tests of which are: “love seeketh not her own;” “love suffereth long and is kind.”

Jonathan illustrates the first; David, in his behaviour toward Saul, gives an illustration not to be surpassed [save in the ways of God with man] of the second. It is a unique characteristic of love; nothing else suffers long and is kind. Duty and stoicism can suffer long, but neither can suffer long and be kind.

No one goes far into the secret of the Lord who has not come under the constraining power of love. It is the radical distinction between legal obedience, and gracious obedience.

Conscience, enlightened by the

Rom. xv.
30.

1 Cor. xiii.
4, 5.

*The power
of love.*

2 Cor. v.
14.

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Matt. xxiii.
23.

Matt. xxv.
27.

Luke ii. 49.

Luke ix.
22.

*"Yet
not I."*

Gal. ii. 20.

2 Cor. v.
14, 15.

2 Cor. iv.
5.

laws of God, says "I ought." That is the obedience of duty. But the heart glowing with the love of God, says, "I must." The imperative of love is mightier than the imperative of law.

Under the legal spirit Jonathan might have stepped resignedly aside to make way for David; under the love spirit Jonathan's passion was to make David king.

The application of this sweet story is obvious. Let me state it in the thought of another. In every human heart there is a throne and a cross. When we come to Christ He is on the cross and self is on the throne. It is the marvel of the Gospel that He saves us by His cross—perfectly, eternally saves us—with no mention of our heart-throne. But even He cannot bless us with God's fullest, best blessings unless we are willing, for dear love's sake, to change places—to put

Christ on the throne, and self on the cross. And only the love-power of the Holy Spirit can win the victory here. Then the blessed life begins.

Much has been written about David's "profound policy" during these years of waiting for the throne to which God had anointed him. Wisdom indeed there was, but wisdom inspired by loving insight. Hunted like a "partridge" on the mountains of Israel, driven outside the land amongst the Gentiles; his life attempted again and again by the king's hand, naught moved David to bitterness nor resentment. In all literature there is nothing nobler, nor more touching, than David's two addresses to Saul. Even the king's morose spirit yielded for the moment to David's unconquerable sweetness.

The gift of Christ is but the supreme proof of God's love to-

Rom. viii.
2.

1 Sam.
xxvi. 20.

1 Sam.
xxiv. 8-15.

1 Sam.
xxvi. 17-20.

*The love
of God.*

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ward man. The history of the race is the record of the divine long-suffering and kindness. The dispensations have been but successive provings of the patience of the divine love toward the whole race.

Gen. i. 26,
27.

Gen. ii. 8.

Gen. iii. 6.

Gen. iii. 8,
9.

Gen. vi. 5,
7.

1 Pet. iii.
20.

Gen. ix.
1-8.

Creating man in innocence, and creating a paradise of beauty for his home, man disobeyed his Creator at the first temptation. What that sin brought down was not divine wrath, but divine compassion. The Lord God Himself came down into the garden to seek and to save His ungrateful and sinful creatures. Again the race, knowing good and evil, chose evil rather than good. So vile did man become that mercy to unborn generations demanded the all but complete extermination of humanity. But even then "the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, one hundred and twenty years."

Saving one family through the flood, God put the earth into the

hands of that family, and their descendants, to govern for Him. But once more man showed the incurable evil of the natural heart, and also the inexhaustible love of God. Instead of utterly destroying the race, He divided it by the barrier of language, and called out, in Abraham, another family.

The history of Israel is but one long demonstration of the evil of fallen man, and of the fact that God will suffer long and be kind. Even the crucifixion of His Son but brought forth new proof of the unchangeable love of God, for to the Jews was the Gospel first sent.

And the second coming of Christ is delayed only because He is “longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

Gen. xi.
1-9.

Gen. xii. 1.

Isa. v. 1-16.

² Chr.
xxxvi.
14-16.

Acts iii.
26.

Acts i. 8.

² Pet. iii. 9.

THE GREATEST THING

“The greatest of these is love.”

1 COR. xiii. 13.

The greatest thing.

1 Cor. xiii.
13.

*Better than
all best
things.*

THE theme of 1 Corinthians xiii., the “New Testament Psalm,” is the exaltation of love, not merely as the “greatest thing in the world,” but as the greatest thing in all worlds.

Note first of all the divine method in this exaltation of love. That method is, chiefly contrast, but contrast not with things that are evil, but rather with things which would be supremely good if love were not better than they.

The human way would be to say that love is greater and better than hatred, malice, uncharitableness, bitterness, evil speaking and like vices. The divine way is to take up, one after the other, things of almost infinite worth, and by contrast with these, lift love into its

right place of absolutely infinite worth.

So here, love is greater than the mightiest gifts for service; greater than angelic and human eloquence combined; greater than the most absolute consecration and utter zeal; greater as a motive and a method than all other motives and methods; greater than knowledge; greater than faith; greater than hope.

Then love is exalted by its qualities. It suffereth long and is kind; is void of envy, self-importance and vanity. Love governs the very manner, and is filled with patience and self-control.

Then the Apostle comes back to the thought of verse two—love is better than knowledge. This is not to say that knowledge is not good, but, as Paul had already warned these knowledge-loving Greeks, “Knowledge puffeth up, but love buildeth up.” There is a tendency

1 Cor. xiii.
1-3.

1 Cor. xiii.
13.

1 Cor. xiii.
4-7.

1 Cor. xiii.
8-12.

1 Cor. viii.
1.

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Gen. iii. 5.

in knowledge to breed pride, and so the believer is reminded that with all his complacency of learning he is but a child, or like one seeing objects but dimly in an ill-lighted mirror, and that as the starlight, though still shining, is swallowed up in the glory of the sunlight, so our tentative and imperfect knowledge, though true in its shadowy way, will "vanish away" when the full knowledge comes.

Not knowledge but love.

1 Cor. ii.
4-8.

In our age, when as never before mere knowledge is exalted as the supreme good, it is well worth laying this lesson to heart. We are lavishing untold wealth on libraries and colleges, and this is well, but if this be all, or chief in our American thought, we shall learn in bitterness and overthrow, the old lesson of the Greek that there is no salvation in knowledge for either individuals or nations.

Already, in the small history of

this small world, the race has seen much "knowledge" vanish away. The Hamitic knowledge vanished in the Greek, and while the product of the Greek imagination is deathless, Aristotle has given way to Copernicus, Æsculapius to Lord Lister, and Archimedes to Edison—what folly to suppose that the knowledge of these moderns is any whit more eternal than the outworn knowledge of the ancients!

The heart of this beautiful psalm lies in verse seven—Love is greater than faith and hope by as much as that which creates is greater than that which is created. Love is the greatest of the three cardinal graces because it creates the other two: "Love believeth all things, hopeth all things."

In the thirteenth chapter of Romans love, as in Corinthians, is not an emotion, nor yet a principle, nor even a character, but an entity,

*The new personality
—Love.*

Rom. xiii.
10.

a somewhat to which all the terms of personality may be applied. "Love is the fulfilling of the law," consequently, "he that loveth hath fulfilled the law."

This fact should be allowed to possess the mind; that love, in the Pauline sense, is a state of being which may be conceived of most readily in terms of personality. This may be seen by the substitution of the name of Christ in those great passages where love is described: "Christ suffereth long and is kind, Christ vaunteth not himself."

Eph. iv. 24.

2 Cor. v.
17.

Gal. vi. 15,
R.V.

John i. 12,
13.

1 John iv.
7, 8.

So also, without violence, the "new man" may be substituted. The new man suffereth long and is kind; is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, beareth all things, believeth all things. But the new man is the "new creation," the born again one, the child (*teknon*, literally "born one,") of God, and this new man, like his Creator, is

Love, and therefore loves. That the manifestation of the new man in *acts* of love is so imperfect is due, of course, to the survival of "the old man," and to the failure of the believer to "walk in the Spirit," but the blessed fact remains always, that the new man is "love," and love is the fulfilling of the law.

It is not that the believer is under the law, and becomes loving by fulfilling it. The precise contrary is true. He is not under the law, and the law worketh not love but wrath. But the believer is, as to his new man, "love" and he is "under grace" and so "loveth," fulfilling the law. He is under, not love of law, but the law of love. To be under law is vainly to seek by way of external obedience, to love God and the neighbor. To be under grace is to love God and the neighbor, by an interior constraint of the

*Not law
but love.*

Rom. vi.
14.

Rom. iv.
15.

Luke x.
25-28.

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Rom. x. 4,
5.

renewed nature. Just as no man is really honest who abstains from stealing for fear of the penitentiary, so no man really fulfils the law through fear of the law. An honest man obeys the law because he is an honest man, in utter forgetfulness, often, that there is a law. He "fulfils the law" not because of the law, but because he "loves" the right conduct which, incidentally, the law approves.

Rom. viii.
3, 4.

Heb. viii.
10.

Heb. viii.
10.

The believer "loves" therefore not because the law commands him to love, but because in his new nature he is a loving man. This is the essence of the new covenant. "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts." No better illustration can be found than mother love. Laws may be found on the statute books which prescribe penalties for the neglect of children by their parents; but when a mother says "I must go to my child," she is not thinking of

the statute and its penalties. A law in her heart makes her say "I must." She usually does not so much as know that there is a statute. Yet when tenderly caring for her child, in obedience to mother love, she is "fulfilling" the statute.

JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN

"And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near unto me, I pray you." GEN. xlvi. 4.

THE reconciliation of Joseph with his brethren is a beautiful illustration in the graces of forgiveness of injuries, and brotherly love, but it is also so overwhelmingly prophetical and typical that it would be a waste of opportunity to confine the exposition to the merely ethical import of the scene.

Beyond doubt we have here a picture-prophecy of that future rec-

A prophetic picture.

Gen. xlvi.
1-15.

Deut. xxx.
1-10.

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Isa. xi.
10-12.

Jer. xxiii.
7, 8.

Ezk. xxxiv.
11-16.

Ezk.
xxxvii.
21-25.

Ezk. xx.
33-42.

Zech. xii.
10.

Rom. xi. 1,
2, 26, 27.

*The two
advents.*

Acts ii. 23.

Matt. xiii.
11-13.

Acts xv.
14-17.

onciliation of the Hebrew people to their long rejected Messiah, which is the theme of some of the most glowing pages of the prophets. The current notion, based upon an entire misconception, or misreading of two New Testament passages, that Israel, in the national sense, is forever rejected, is unwarranted by Scripture. On the contrary, both the Old Testament and the New are at one in the declaration that the Hebrew people are to be restored to Palestine, converted, and then enter upon the period of their greatest earthly exaltation and distinction.

In the divine knowledge lay not only the first advent and rejection of Messiah, but also the interval following, that is, the age in which we live, and which is marked by the "mysteries of the kingdom of heaven," and also by the calling out from among the Gentiles of the

New Testament church, a Bride for Himself—typified by Asenath, Joseph's Egyptian bride—an interval which will terminate in His second advent for the restoration and conversion of Israel.

Eph. v.
25-32.

2 Cor. xi.
2.

The Old Testament prophets foretold both advents. The first, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass." And the second, "And his feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives which is before Jerusalem . . . And the Lord shall be King over all the earth."

The prophetic perplexity.

Zech. ix. 9.

Matt. xxi.
5.

Zech. xiv.
4-9.

Matt. xxiv.
29-44.

The prophets were naturally enough exercised over the seeming paradox of their own prophecies, foretelling, as they did, both the sufferings of Messiah, "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted

Isa. liii. 3.

Isa. ix.
6-7.

with grief . . . he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities," and in striking contrast, His earthly exaltation and glory: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever."

1 Pet. i.
10-11.

Peter tells us that "they searched diligently" for a solution of their own apparently irreconcilable writings, which in one breath made the coming One to be "a Man of Sorrows," and in the next a resistless Sovereign "executing justice and judgment in the earth," upon the restored throne of David.

Then, according to Peter, they were assured, simply, that the prophecies were not to be fulfilled in their day. But they did not see the Church, for the Church is not in Old Testament prophecy. “How that by revelation he made known unto me (Paul) the mystery which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel.”

Eph. iii.
2-10.

The prophetic testimony concerning the restoration of Israel may be thus summarized:

*The resto-
ration of
Israel.*

i. When the Gentile Church, which is Christ’s body, is complete, He will receive her unto Himself. “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am,

John xiv.
3.

1 Thess. iv.
14-16.

Acts xv.
14-16.

Matt. xxiv.
30.

there ye may be also." This is an absolutely new promise to an absolutely new body, the Church. It is never connected in Scripture with that which follows, viz.: His return visibly to earth: "They shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory."

*The church.*Matt. xvi.
18.Matt. ii.
1, 2.Matt. iv.
23.Matt. x.
5-7.John xvi.
12, 13.

Our Lord did no more respecting the Church than to announce His purpose to build it, indeed He mentioned the Church but twice, using the word three times in His earthly life. He came as King of the Jews; accordingly spoke of the kingdom rather than the Church.

To have developed the doctrine of the Church before His crucifixion and resurrection would have been mere confusion to His disciples. It was one of the "many things" which they "could not bear" and which was left for the

coming ministry of the Spirit; but He could sow the seed of that doctrine, prepare the way for it, and that He did in the wonderful passage in His High Priestly prayer: "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

The essential truth concerning the Church is that it is the body of Christ. Our Lord's preparatory doctrine uses the similitude of a vine and its branches; the Comforter's completed doctrine uses the similitude of the human body: "As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being mnay, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body."

2. He will restore the Davidic monarchy of which He is heir, and will regather dispersed Israel.

John xvii.
21-23.

*What is
the church?*

Eph. i. 22,
23.

1 Cor. xii.
12, 13.

John xv.
1-4.

Acts xv.
16, 17.

Luke i. 32,
33.

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Rom. i. 3.

"After this I will return and will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down."

Deut. xxx. 6.

3. He will reveal Himself to regathered Israel, and thus convert them. "The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live."

Ezk. xx. 33-42.

Zech. xii. 10.

No one can read the glowing and tender prophecies of this coming day of Israel's reconciliation without perceiving how great a place it holds in the heart of Jesus. How beautifully the reconciliation of Joseph and his brethren typifies this. Rejected and in intention slain, Joseph goes to the Gentile Egypt, where he becomes a blessing and receives a bride. This done, the touching scene of the reconciliation follows. And this is precisely the prophetic order.

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